United Nations A/C.3/61/SR.9

General Assembly
Sixty-first session

Official Records

Distr.: General
2 November 2006

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 9th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 9 October 2006, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Al Bayati ..... (Iraq)

Contents

Agenda item 61: Advancement of women (*continued*)

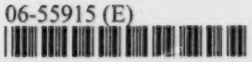
(a) Advancement of women (*continued*)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

06-55915 (E)



The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 61: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/61/283, A/61/303)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/61/381, A/61/122 and Add.1, A/61/318 and A/61/292)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/61/174)

1. **Mr. Amil** (Pakistan), commending the relevant reports of the Secretary-General, particularly the long awaited in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122 and Add.1), said that as long as violence against women continued, there could be no real progress towards equality, development and peace. Pursuant to the Beijing Platform for Action, Pakistan had launched a national plan of action, which included judicial and police reforms and promoted effected partnership with civil society to help raise awareness of gender issues. Women currently had increased opportunities for legal redress when they felt that their rights were violated. In view of cultural and traditional sensitivities, separate women police stations as well as separate complaint cells had been established to provide safe and confidential investigative services to women. Rehabilitation and crisis centres had been opened in various cities to provide round-the-clock medical and legal aid to women and shelter.

2. His Government had banned the un-Islamic and harmful traditional practice of exchange marriages and early marriages in Pakistan. In a landmark decision, the Supreme Court of Pakistan had banned traditions like vani, by which blood feuds were settled with forced marriages. To eliminate the culture of impunity and bring domestic laws into compliance with international commitments, various legislative amendments had also been introduced, making the culturally entrenched practice of honour killing, for example, punishable by death. Legislation had also been enacted to make all offences except murder or terrorism bailable, which had enabled 1,300 women prisoners who had been languishing in jails for various minor crimes to be released quickly.

3. With respect to political reforms, women's political representation in the Senate, National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies as well as in the local government had been enhanced to an unprecedented level. Women in Pakistan currently enjoyed 33 per cent representation in the local government and 20 per cent in the National Assembly and Senate. Three Federal Ministers, five Ministers of State and several parliamentary secretaries in the National Parliament were women. His Government had also established a 10 per cent quota for women in government jobs. Women were being encouraged to enter areas of activity traditionally dominated by men, such as the Air Force. On the economic front, various microcredit programmes had been launched to fund women's income-generating projects. While much remained to be done, his Government was strongly committed to achieving gender equality and the true empowerment of women in Pakistan.

4. **Ms. Critchlow** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that CARICOM States attached high priority to issues concerning women, which was shown by the equal rights accorded to women and men through their constitutions and the increased sensitivity to gender in their national development strategies. Many challenges remained, however. The report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/61/1) had noted, for instance, the higher than average death rate during pregnancy and childbirth among women in developing countries, the missed goal of gender parity in education by 2005 in keeping with the Millennium Development Goals and the epidemic of violence against women. In the interest of the long-term goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women, such shortcomings must be addressed with urgency.

5. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was a vital instrument for promoting gender equality. Every State of the CARICOM region was a party to the Convention and had presented, at least, its initial report to the Committee. Her delegation welcomed the extension of the annual meeting time of the Committee, which had allowed it to consider an increased number of country reports in its attempt to eliminate the substantial backlog.

6. Guided by the Beijing Platform for Action and other internationally agreed development frameworks, including the Goals, CARICOM States had been making incremental progress in enhancing the status of women. Women of the region were benefiting from

increased access to education and participated more actively in politics and decision-making, though such participation was not uniform throughout the region. Those achievements notwithstanding, gender-based violence, the disproportionately higher levels of HIV/AIDS and poverty among women were but a few of the challenges which required increased attention.

7. In recognition of the linkages between poverty and violence against women, Ministers of the region had agreed to make gender mainstreaming a key priority for policy and programming activities and to enhance efforts to address the feminization of poverty and female unemployment. As the prevalence of poverty and its impact on the status of women were factors in the international economic environment, her delegation emphasized the need for an increased flow of resources, improved terms of trade and debt relief as a means of assisting developing countries and called for the early resumption of negotiations on the Doha Development Round.

8. The Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS was the principal mechanism for coordinating regional action to halt and reverse the spread of the epidemic, and national programmes were generally focused on increased public awareness, de-stigmatization of the epidemic and enhanced access to treatment, care and support, including access to reproductive health services and antiretroviral drugs. Several of the national HIV/AIDS programmes had reported reductions in the incidence of mother to child transmission of the disease.

9. The Regional Commission on Gender-Based Violence had been established to address the causes of violence against women. Attention was also being given to the problem of human trafficking. CARICOM therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's timely in-depth study on all forms of violence against women. The success of anti-trafficking efforts much depended on greater awareness of that issue, increased economic opportunities for women and strengthened legislation and enforcement. In conclusion, her delegation stressed the continued importance of concerted action by the international community in support of the advancement of women and the realization of the goal of gender equality.

10. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) said that violence against women was rejected by all religions and all legislations. His delegation welcomed the publication of the study of that subject prepared by the Secretary-General and was examining it carefully in order to be able to participate with other Member States in whatever steps might be taken in that regard. The Sudan continued to be a pioneer with respect to women's enjoyment of all their civil and political rights and the promotion of their participation in policymaking. The gains in that area had been achieved as early as the 1960s, and the presence of Sudanese women continued to be outstanding in all fields. The first woman had entered the Sudanese Parliament in 1965 and the number of women Parliamentarians had grown significantly since that time.

11. Women occupied leadership positions in both the judicial and executive branches at the federal, state and municipal levels, serving as presidential advisers, ministers, governors, judges and ambassadors. Legislation had been passed to strengthen those gains in areas such as non-discrimination in employment, equal pay, protection against hazards and violence, training opportunities, vacations and maternity leave and the right to participate in unions. At all levels of education, female enrolment had made significant gains over the preceding decade, thanks to Government efforts and policies, actually surpassing male enrolment in higher education. Other important governmental strategies relating to women pertained to safe maternity and health for all.

12. Sudanese women had played a role in peacemaking, taking part in the consultative delegations to the Naivasha and Abuja negotiations. They played an effective role in peacebuilding and reconstruction projects through the Women's Centre for Peace and Development, in partnership with the United Nations and its organizations and agencies active in the area of women's issues. They also participated through a programme for the qualification of female cadres in fields such as negotiation; strengthening of social dialogue; training of women in the field of early warning for dispute settlement; the propagation of a culture of peace and the rejection of violence; and programmes for the social reintegration of women returnees from refugee camps. Also significant was the pioneering presence of Sudanese women in foreign programmes, meetings and conferences and their outstanding contributions in the areas of strengthening bonds among peoples and exchanging experience and expertise in the various fields of women's activities.

13. Palestinian women were the victims of murders and expulsions under Israeli occupation. The United Nations must take immediate action to end that suffering and ensure the rights of Palestinian women to a life of freedom and dignity in an independent homeland that enjoyed the same rights as the other nations of the world.

14. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that her Government was committed to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Women were placed at the centre of Colombia's peace and development policies, which included increasing employment and educational opportunities and political participation and addressing violence against women. In Colombia, men and women enjoyed equal access to education at all levels. Colombia's measures to promote economic growth had increased productive employment for men and women alike. It was carrying out microcredit and business training programmes for female-headed households and promoted specialized fairs for businesses run by women to help to ensure more stable and equitable income. Women's participation in decision-making positions at all levels of government was high. Such participation had been given added impetus in 2005 when the 16 most influential political parties and movements of Colombia had endorsed a pact for the effective inclusion of women in politics.

15. With respect to violence against women, her Government's security policy had led to the reduction of all crime indicators in the country and generated a greater atmosphere of tranquillity and coexistence for all men and women in Colombia. Legislative efforts were also being made to protect the rights of women in violent family situations, after the break-up of a marital union and at the workplace. In addition, a strategy had been developed to combat trafficking in persons, including prevention, training of government officials, legal prosecution, international cooperation, victim and witness protection and information systems. Furthermore, Colombia had signed an agreement with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees aimed at incorporating a gender focus in its prevention and protection policies for displaced persons.

16. Her Government had also established a monitoring mechanism on gender issues in January 2006 to develop a system of indicators and follow-up on official plans and policies. It had also distributed a manual to train public officials to incorporate gender perspectives into public policies. Lastly, her delegation noted with interest the report of the Secretary-General on the in-depth study on all forms of violence against women and on measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/61/174).

17. **Ms. Sanders-Ten Holte** (Netherlands) said that political and economic power went hand in hand. Discrimination against women would continue and the Millennium Development Goals remain elusive until women were fully included in the decision-making process at all levels. In order to achieve a deeper, more inclusive, value-driven democracy, men and women must work side by side for equality. More than 70 per cent of the people living on less than a dollar a day were women. Globalization had led to increased employment opportunities for women, but gender inequalities with respect to the quality of work, pay and working conditions had intensified. The contribution of women to development was still highly underestimated. Rural women produced, for example, 60 per cent to 80 per cent of food in developing countries, but many faced restrictions on the right to own, use and inherit land.

18. Women were underrepresented at all levels of decision-making: globally the proportion of women in parliaments had increased from 11 per cent in 1995 to 16 per cent in 2006, but only 14 per cent of countries had achieved the target of 30 per cent representation of women in their national parliaments set by the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. Only 11 States had a female head of government. In the developed North, fewer than 20 per cent of political and corporate leaders are women. In the Netherlands, the percentage of women corporate leaders was only 3 per cent.

19. Women's movements tended to invest most of their energy in strategies aimed at halting the exploitation, discrimination, sexual violence and limitations that women faced in their daily lives. Learning to be assertive and mainstreaming strategies were not enough, however. Women should be decision-makers and economic leaders in their own right. There was a need to focus on new ways of making connections between men and women and to seek ways of linking the women's movement to other social movements and campaigns. For gender equality to be attained, women needed more knowledge, income, respect and self-esteem. Such changes could only be

sustained if men had a positive attitude towards that strategy.

20. The strategy would include an alliance between men and women to enhance the participation of women in decision-making; serious investments in education to fight poverty and promote cultural change; political training at all levels and education in good governance; firm support for women's organizations and women entrepreneurs in recognition that women are agents for development; and enhanced access in the area of information and communication technology to create business and employment opportunities and facilitate networking.

21. The minimum target for the share of women's participation in leadership positions should be one-third — in politics and government as well as economic institutions and boardrooms. Setting targets along the lines of Norway's new rules for equal representation on company boards, which included sanctions, could truly make a difference. Lastly, the United Nations should be leading the way towards gender equality, including through the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

22. **Mr. Hatem** (Iraq) said that Iraq had been a pioneer in the field of women's rights since the earliest times. Indeed, King Hammurabi had established one of the most ancient sets of laws known to history for the purpose of providing justice for all human beings, including women. Though a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Iraq had not achieved tangible results in recent decades owing to successive conflicts. After a long period of dictatorship and repression, Iraq was now striving to lay the foundations of democracy and human rights and was observing a broadening of women's participation in the political sphere and civil society. Active women's organizations were being formed amid the emergence of new concepts such as civil society, non-governmental organizations, democracy and transfer of authority. After suffering decades of hardship and non-participation in political life, women had demonstrated their worth and their ability to meet challenges and assume responsibility.

23. Women in Iraq had defied all manner of terrorism and taken part in the 2005 elections, which had resulted in their occupying 31 per cent of the seats in the Transitional National Assembly, one of whose most important tasks had been to draft a Constitution. In 2006, Iraqi women had obtained four Cabinet posts, one of which was that of Minister of Women's Affairs, established in 2004. Moreover, the role of the High-level National Committee for the Advancement of Iraqi Women had been strengthened by the establishment of a mechanism to follow up the related strategy in accordance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and women now held 25 per cent of the seats in Parliament under Iraq's permanent Constitution.

24. The Constitution contained articles to promote gender equality with respect to political rights, including the right to vote and the right to stand for public office; equality before the law without discrimination; and equality for women in areas such as social and health security, an adequate income and proper housing. It also provided that at least one quarter of the Members of Parliament should be women. Civil society organizations had played an important role in the advancement of women through the development of gender analysis skills, gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of national women's institutions. The Iraqi people were currently in need of assistance from States and all international and regional organizations in achieving stability, security and advancement, special attention being devoted to Iraqi women to help them meet the challenges of establishing a society based on true democracy and respect for human rights.

25. **Mr. Ritter** (Liechtenstein) said that the growing international attention paid to violence against women had its origin in the relentless efforts and grassroots work of women's organizations and movements around the world. He welcomed the broad involvement of the different stakeholders involved in the report of the Secretary-General providing the in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122 and Add.1), noting that the report addressed issues that were often perceived, not least by victims of violence, as taboos or non-issues, such as the impact of culture and its politicization on the phenomenon of violence against women. Liechtenstein supported the emphasis in the study on the need to take effective counter-measures at all levels, including the local and community levels.

26. The study provided all the elements for a comprehensive text on violence against women to be adopted by the General Assembly. In that context, he welcomed specific discussion on such violence in other

intergovernmental bodies such as the Security Council, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council, with the latter playing the leading role in that process. Liechtenstein also welcomed the study's emphasis on the pressing need for ending impunity for acts of violence against women, which should be a top priority of national judicial systems. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) treated violence against women in the context of crimes against humanity and war crimes. He hoped that the Court would soon be able to send a clear signal on impunity. In that regard, the Court and its Trust Fund for Victims were a promising example which needed to be followed and consolidated to enable States and the international community to meet the challenge of eliminating violence against women.

27. **Ms. Vikor** (Norway) said that the United Nations system needed to improve its gender mainstreaming efforts and make related activities an integral part of the Organization's work. Such activities needed to be funded by core resources rather than depend on contributions by bilateral donors. The Government of Norway would allocate a significant amount of its international development cooperation budget for new gender equality interventions in 2007, with a specific budget line for the advancement of women, and increase its core funding for the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

28. To achieve better results in that regard, Norway had a three-pronged strategy: (1) better systems for mainstreaming gender perspective at all levels and in all relevant areas; (2) increased focus on targeted interventions for the advancement of women; and (3) equity in representation. In Norway, women's participation in the boards of privately owned public limited companies and State-owned companies had significantly increased in the past three years, with the former now being obligated to have at least 40 per cent women on their boards. Norway would provide substantial support to the implementation of the Gender Action Plan that had emerged from the high-level conference that it had co-hosted together with the United Kingdom and the World Bank on the Millennium Development Goals and women's economic rights.

29. The United Nations reform process was an opportunity to strengthen the Organization's role in advancing the situation for women and needed to produce tangible results on the ground. Norway supported the six key areas for action identified in the report of the Secretary-General providing the in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122 and Add.1), and welcomed the initiative by the Netherlands and France for a resolution on violence against women to be adopted by the General Assembly.

30. Her country welcomed the upcoming open debate in the Security Council on resolution 1325 (2000). The Peacebuilding Commission should consistently include the gender perspective in all the issues that it considered; and her country advocated for the swift incorporation of a gender expert in the Peacebuilding Support Office. Lastly, Norway commended India for sending 125 police women to the United Nations peacekeeping operation in Liberia and hoped other troop-providing countries would follow suit.

31. **Ms. Li** Xiaomei (China) said that her country supported the continued implementation of gender mainstreaming by various United Nations agencies. At the first meeting of the Human Rights Council, it had pointed out that the Council should take measures for advancing the rights of vulnerable groups such as women in bringing about a new momentum for the international human rights cause.

32. When the Chinese Government had introduced its fifth and sixth periodic reports, which also included the second report of the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong and the first report of the Administrative Region of Macao, before the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in August 2006, it had outlined the measures that it had taken to implement the relevant Convention, such as the enactment or amendment of laws; measures towards establishing and improving mechanisms for promoting gender equality; pooling resources together to address issues related to women's survival and development; and campaigns to publicize the Convention and raise public awareness on gender equality. The Government had also taken steps and adopted policies as regards political participation, employment and trafficking of women.

33. The Chinese Government had also taken a number of measures over the past year to ensure women's rights and interests in line with the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit. Its National Development Programme devoted an entire section to safeguarding the rights and interests of women and

children and made numerous references to the Program for the Development of Chinese Women. Her Government would continue to work unremittingly to safeguard the rights and interests of Chinese women in line with national circumstances and in implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

34. **Ms. Barrett** (United States of America) said that her country had been engaged in sustained efforts to support women and their development, both in combating violence against women and in empowering them. Human trafficking not only harmed victims physically and emotionally, but also threatened public health and fuelled organized crime. In that respect, her country had contributed substantial funds bilaterally in the past five years towards anti-trafficking programmes in more than 100 countries, and regularly supported international organizations in assisting countries' efforts to combat trafficking. It also countered demand in trafficking through a law which prohibited nationals from engaging in child sex tourism anywhere in the world, travelling with the intent to engage in illicit sexual conduct or operating a child sex tour business, with serious penalties of up to 30 years in prison. Her country also had programmes to identify and assist victims, and help reunite them with their families.

35. The United States was providing access to health care for women, including maternal and child health. As nearly half of HIV/AIDS-infected adults were women, she commended the international community's gender-related work to combat HIV/AIDS. Also, her country was proud to be in the forefront of collecting health data disaggregated by gender. The President's $15 billion Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief worked to meet the needs of women and girls, including orphans and victims of sex trafficking, rape, abuse and exploitation and had helped over 3.2 million pregnant women prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission. In dealing with health risks to women, it was crucial to challenge behavioural norms, such as through "ABC" messages ("Abstain, Be faithful, use Condoms") being disseminated in South Africa.

36. Education, and literacy in particular, were the cornerstone of the fight against HIV/AIDS and for empowering women and girls to realize a better future, and were a major component of the country's efforts to support women and girls worldwide. In its global efforts to empower women, the United States Secretary of State had hosted a session with Ministers and Heads of State to discuss strategies for the political, economic, legal and educational empowerment of women worldwide, as part of a process to create a network of women leaders to continue a global dialogue. Also, the United States provided $50 million to $70 million annually on programmes for refugee women and children; prevention and response to gender-based violence in refugee camps and settings for internally displaced persons, and helping women in post-conflict situations through rebuilding schools, providing basic education and improving health care.

37. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh) said that, while the primary responsibility for the advancement of women rested with Governments, efforts by the international community remained crucial for the full realization of the goals of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its protocols and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Bangladesh remained fully committed to the principle of equal rights of men and women, and its Constitution guaranteed those rights and included provisions for special measures for the advancement of women and children.

38. Women had gained visibility and mobility in Bangladesh, owing to gender-parity in primary and secondary education and access to birth control measures and to microcredit. Significant progress had been achieved in maternal health and childcare. The special poverty needs of women had been addressed through various safety-net programmes, and the steady increase in the economic participation of women had been due to their employment in the garment, shoe and cosmetics industries in the formal sector, and self-employment in the non-formal sector.

39. The Government had undertaken pro-poor, gender responsive policies at all levels and had reflected gender dimensions in its Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). It allocated a significant portion of its budget towards expanding women's education, which was free up to the twelfth grade. Economic empowerment had also led women towards political empowerment: Bangladesh had over 13,000 elected female representatives in local government, for example, and the country's positions of Prime Minister and Opposition Leader had been occupied by women for more than fifteen years. Despite that progress,

many challenges remained for Bangladeshi women, including the risk of being the "new poor", which resulted from globalization. The phasing out of the Multifibre Arrangement (MFA), for example, put more than one million women at risk of losing their jobs.

40. In that regard, international cooperation in the form of official development assistance (ODA) and technical and financial assistance was critical to keeping women employed. In a least developed country like Bangladesh, women's advancement was often linked with foreign direct investment, duty-free and quota-free market access for all products and the free movement of labour. Bangladesh was adopting a number of laws to protect women from violence, and crisis centres and safe custody homes had been set up to protect them from sexual abuse and harassment. The elimination of trafficking in persons, particularly women and children, was accorded particular priority both nationally, as through the establishment of the National Advisory Committee, and regionally, as through the Government's ratification of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution.

41. Bangladesh was a State party to almost all the major international instruments relating to women's rights and was active in the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Human Rights Council. As a member of the Peacebuilding Commission, Bangladesh remained fully committed to strengthening its efforts to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Global partnerships were needed to achieve gender equality and gender justice. To that end, the mobilization of adequate international resources to supplement national efforts was a categorical imperative.

42. **Mr. Chem** (Cambodia) said that in response to the 2005 World Summit Outcome, the Government of Cambodia had adopted the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) which consolidated its Socio-economic Development Plan, National Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Millennium Development Goals into a single planning and monitoring framework. The NSDP recognized that the speedy removal of latent and overt barriers to gender equalities was critical to poverty reduction. The Ministry of Women's Affairs was elaborating responsive policies and strategies, helping to enhance the economic empowerment for women, develop related laws and mechanisms to protect the rights of women, promote HIV/AIDS prevention, control nutrition of women and girls and increase their participation in formal and non-formal education.

43. Those efforts had had a positive impact on women's health, as reflected in the significant reduction in the number of women receiving gynaecological-obstetric inpatient care, and the fact that the hospital maternal mortality rate had remained stable in the past five years. The Government had recently adopted the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of the Victims, which played a significant role in the enforcement of measures to ensure safety for victims of domestic violence. Cambodia highly appreciated the contributions by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in their efforts to promote gender equality and empower women, as well as the accomplishments of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) in promoting the cause of women in the world, in particular in developing countries.

44. Because women still faced limitations and obstacles, many continued to be left behind in the process of globalization, and the opening of national borders made them more susceptible to becoming victims of trafficking. In that regard, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remained the benchmark for the efforts of Governments and the international community to further the advancement of women. A balanced and comprehensive approach was needed to achieve relevant objectives. The international community should thus remain firm in its commitment to assist developing nations and honour its commitments to official development assistance (ODA), in particular to least developed countries under the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries. Those concerted efforts were required for the successful achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and, in particular, in the improvement of lives of women.

45. **Mrs. Assoumou** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that Côte d'Ivoire had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, all of the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the Millennium Development Goals, all of which indicated her Government's commitment to the promotion of

women's rights. Since the outbreak of military conflict, women and young girls had suffered greatly, falling victim to physical and sexual violence. As a result of the war, women had stepped into leadership roles in the family, politics and the economy.

46. The women of Côte d'Ivoire supported Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which called for women to participate more actively in peace negotiations and post-war reconstruction. As a result, women would be involved in activities to promote the cause of peace and more and more of them would be a part of decision-making bodies. Two hundred women candidates had already been trained to run in general elections. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire was mainstreaming a gender perspective and had created a department to oversee and promote gender equality within the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs. However, in spite of all the progress made, women were still hampered in their advancement, experiencing ill-treatment and marginalization.

47. **Mr. Sin** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that, in 1946, his country had adopted a law on the equality of the sexes. Its most recent report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had been considered in 2005 and had been the subject of a frank and constructive dialogue.

48. He drew the attention of the Committee to attempts by Japan to conceal crimes that it had committed during the Second World War, such as military sexual slavery, also known as the "comfort women" system, the forced conscription of millions of people from Asian countries and the massacre of 1 million Koreans. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences had recommended that the Japanese Government accept legal responsibility for the crime of sexual slavery, make a public apology and compensate the victims. However, the recommendations had not been implemented. The attitude of Japan was in striking contrast to that of other countries which had made continued efforts to apologize to victims and compensate them for past wrongs.

49. **Mr. Tarrago** (Brazil), speaking on behalf of MERCOSUR reaffirmed its support for all of the major women's rights instruments and underscored the importance of equal conditions in the workplace. MERCOSUR was committed to supporting new forms of entrepreneurship, formalizing domestic work and promoting the rights of indigenous and rural workers. A great accomplishment in the area of gender equality was the election of Ms. Michelle Bachelet to the Presidency of the Republic of Chile during the current year. It was important to foster an attitude of respect for all, regardless of sexual orientation, and to provide access to sexual and reproductive health services, which would reduce the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, a disease which was spreading among women.

50. MERCOSUR welcomed the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women. In 1994, the MERCOSUR region had adopted the Convention of Belem do Para do Para to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women, considered a model for binding treaties on violence against women. Violence against women was not only an expression of inequality of power between men and women, but also had negative repercussions, including missed workdays, the feminization of HIV/AIDS and poverty and poor school performance by children who witnessed such violence. A broad arsenal of techniques, including social support services and the employment of preventive arrest in case of threats, needed to be applied in order to combat violence against women. Lastly, he pointed out that, in 2006, the Organization of American States had developed a hemispheric strategy containing a vast array of measures to confront the problem of human trafficking, particularly of women and children.

51. **Mr. Chernenko** (Russian Federation) said that the Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women was a most significant document. However, some of its provisions, particularly in the section on violence against women in armed conflict, were tendentious and inappropriately politicized, hampering resolution of the issue by the international community. The fiftieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women had been conducted in a constructive spirit. There were grounds for optimism that the confrontational stance characterizing previous sessions would be overcome and that the reform of the Commission would continue to be conducted in a constructive and non-politicized manner.

52. The Russian Federation strongly adhered to the provisions of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Its combined sixth and seventh periodic reports were being prepared

and would be submitted during the current year. A new programme document entitled Gender Strategy of the Russian Federation had been discussed in an inter-agency gender equality commission. The gender strategy would establish the requirements and criteria for guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities for women in all aspects of life in the country. The strong and growing Russian economy had had a beneficial effect on social development, improving living standards for women. During the current year, President Putin had announced measures to aid pregnant women and mothers caring for young children as well as assistance to women returning to the workforce after giving birth.

53. **Ms. Sapag** (Chile) stressed the importance of implementing international commitments dealing with gender equality and women's empowerment and reaffirmed Chile's commitment to implement the relevant Conventions and the Beijing Platform for Action and to attain the Millennium Development Goals. She also welcomed the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122 and Add.1), which would help States in their implementation and follow-up of the relevant policies.

54. For the first time in its history, Chile had a woman President, who had been elected with 53 per cent of the vote and had mainstreamed gender equality in the remit of all her senior collaborators. She had made a qualitative leap forward in Chile in terms of putting women in positions of political power. Obstacles remained to be overcome, however, owing to the "binominal" (two-seat) electoral system, which undermined women's election chances. Hence, efforts to have a quota law enacted were being made by the National Women's Service (SERNAM), which was also currently implementing is Second Equal Opportunities Plan.

55. President Bachelet had issued a Code of Good Practice regarding equal opportunities and treatment in the public sector, and measures for reconciling work and family responsibilities in the bodies of the State Central Administration. It was hoped that the private sector would endorse those measures. The Chilean justice system had been modernized through the creation of family courts, accompanied by new laws governing domestic violence, civil marriage, and sexual harassment in the workplace, and amendments to the filiation laws. Chile had set up 29 reception centres to deal with domestic violence around the country, as well as a national hotline, and in 2007 would be opening shelters for women and children affected by violence, with a view to their subsequent reintegration. Such progress would not have been possible without guidelines from the United Nations and its agencies. Chile today had a historic opportunity now that it had a female President who stood up for women.

56. **Ms. Ageel** (Saudi Arabia) said that her country accorded particular importance to the status of women from cradle to grave, based on numerous passages of the sharia that stressed women's equality with men in terms of their humanity and their rights. Two important underlying Koranic principles, the unity of creation of the two sexes from a single soul and the balance of mutual obligations and rights between women and men, had inspired the Saudi Arabian Constitution, article 9 of which provided: "The family is the kernel of Saudi society, and its members shall be brought up on the basis of the Islamic faith ...". The country's current development plan was founded on the strengthening of the family, the preservation of Arab and Islamic family values, the enhancement of women's participation and the development of their capacities; the rights of citizens and their families in times of emergency, sickness, disability and old age; support for the social security system and encouragement of charitable works; and the empowerment of women both within the family and in the workplace.

57. Significant progress had been realized in the field of education, where all needs in terms of buildings, teachers and curricula had been met. In particular, a rapid increase in female enrolment had closed the gap between boys and girls at the secondary and university levels and nearly so at the primary level. Female students constituted 48.6 per cent of the total, the corresponding percentages at the primary and secondary levels being 48 and 50.3 per cent, respectively. In higher education, female students now exceeded male students, representing 56.5 per cent. Saudi Arabia was also witnessing an increase in the participation of women in all Government sectors, as well as in the media and in cultural and educational fields. Many had higher degrees in science and occupied high posts in the academic and medical worlds. One should not forget that, in 2000, Saudi Arabia had signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

58. Saudi Arabian women played an important role in charitable and social organizations, the establishment of which was encouraged by the Government, and in chambers of commerce, the Shura (Advisory) Council and national dialogue conferences. They also made important contributions to the economy, particularly in the area of investment, where their invested savings, including those of an increasing number of Saudi Arabian businesswomen, amounted to approximately 15 billion riyals. Available statistics showed that the number of women-owned businesses entered in the commercial register was over 22,500, representing more than 4.7 per cent of the establishments registered with chambers of commerce and industry in the Kingdom and including a variety of economic activities, among them industrial and agricultural activities, many of which, such as contracting and construction, had in the past been the preserve of men. Lastly, the Government was making every effort for the advancement of women, in keeping with the sharia, in order to assure them a constructive role in society.

59. **Ms. Feller** (Mexico) said that, while there had been some improvement in the lot of women in Latin America, all kinds of discrimination based on gender discrimination remained. Mexico was fully committed to implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, especially in areas of major concern. Her delegation was convinced that, through a policy of openness and cooperation with international women's rights bodies and the promotion of new initiatives, a path was being forged towards eradicating the practices of discrimination and inequality of which many Mexican women were victims.

60. Violence against women had been a serious impediment to the success of development plans and respect for human rights and severely disrupted Latin American societies. She therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's in-depth study on the subject and the INSTRAW Gender Awareness Information and Networking System. With invaluable UNIFEM support, Mexico had developed a national system, the first in the region, for improving gender indicators and statistics, which served as a basis for implementing national policies and services in favour of women, and was seeking to export the model to other Latin American and Caribbean countries. UNIFEM was a strategic tool for strengthening national bodies involved in women's issues and provided invaluable assistance on the ground through its technical assistance and its help in forging solid alliances between Governments and civil society. Her country, a staunch contributor to UNIFEM and INSTRAW, felt that more tangible results in terms of time management, effective use of resources, and elimination of duplication could be achieved through effective coordination and the creation of synergies among agencies involved with gender issues.

61. Her delegation was convinced that the difficulty in implementing the instruments for guaranteeing respect for women's rights lay in deficient dissemination of information and promotion of those rights. As long as women were unaware of their rights, Governments could do little to guarantee them. What was needed was reliable indicators and statistics, access to justice for women and effective monitoring mechanisms. Above all, however, education was the essential requirement. As long as the gender dimension was not incorporated into curricula and men were not involved in those efforts, one could expect nothing but fragile and limited results.

62. **Mr. Pekarchuk** (Ukraine) said that sexual exploitation and trafficking in women remained among the worst forms of violence against women, as confirmed in the study by the Secretary-General. Experience over the previous decade suggested that those forms of abuse were on the rise, especially in areas of armed conflict. His delegation therefore hoped for the successful completion of negotiations on the draft resolutions under consideration on trafficking in women and girls, and on slavery and trafficking in persons. Efforts needed to be redoubled to end the brutal phenomena of sexual exploitation, trafficking, and other forms of violence against women.

63. Reaffirming Ukraine's commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, both of which constituted an overarching framework for gender equality, a national priority for his country, he said that Ukraine saw women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming not only as important objectives, but also as a means of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. More than 1 million women in Ukraine were engaged in entrepreneurial activities and almost half of all women in the country had received higher education or secondary special education, while women accounted for more than half of all university students.

64. His country's proactive approach had resulted in a number of initiatives undertaken by the Government to promote women's empowerment and gender equality, including the passing of relevant laws and decrees, the preparation of a gender strategy, and the drawing up of a national programme on the establishment of gender equality, which was soon to be adopted. A parliamentary subcommittee on gender equality, a ministerial coordination council on equal rights, the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports, national and local authorities, and civil society organizations had also been established.

65. Ukraine was a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, had ratified the Optional Protocol and did its utmost to fulfil its reporting obligations to the relevant treaty body. Significantly, Kyiv had recently hosted the thirty-first session of the General Assembly of the International Council of Women (ICW), at which the First Lady had declared that Ukraine was responding with dignity to the challenge for all democratic countries: that of giving women a chance for advancement.

66. **Ms. Na-Allah** (Niger) said that her Government had taken several steps for the advancement of women and the promotion of gender equality in accordance with the recommendations of the Fourth World Conference on Women and other relevant United Nations resolutions and recommendations. Niger had adopted legislation requiring that at least 10 per cent of elected officials in the Government and State administration should be women, which had resulted in the election of 14 women to parliament and 6 women to the post of Government Minister. Two major programmes had also been developed on the legal status of women and on women leadership.

67. Some 63 per cent of the population of the Niger lived below the poverty line, of which 73 per cent were women. Her Government was making efforts to address the situation through several projects and programmes, including the extension of microcredit to women, especially poor women in rural areas, and other means of promoting income-generating activities. The Niger had also adopted legislation to promote education and training for all children without any gender-based discrimination.

68. Despite economic difficulties, considerable efforts had been made to improve access to health services, including the construction of treatment centres, the training of community health providers, a vaccination programme, a family planning programme and activities to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Women and children were the cornerstone of her Government's health policies. Mothers and children received free treatment and family planning services.

69. Concerning violence against women, the Niger had reformed its Penal Code to include such crimes as slavery, female genital mutilation and sexual harassment and had strengthened penalties against offences such as rape. In conclusion, her delegation reiterated the Niger's commitment to improving the situation of women and expressed its gratitude for the bilateral and multilateral efforts made to improve the lives of the country's women. It underscored, in particular, the role played by the United Nations Development Fund for Women in that regard.

70. **Mr. Fieschi** (France), speaking also on behalf of the delegation of the Netherlands, said that difficulty in measuring the extent and the nature of violence against women had led to disagreement on the appropriate methods for combating the scourge. Thus, the Secretary-General's in-depth report on violence against women, which was based on extensive research, statistical studies, information provided by Member States and information resulting from regional and international consultations, should receive delegations' priority attention. France, together with the Netherlands, would soon submit a draft resolution aimed at stepping up efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, with a view to its adoption by consensus.

71. **Mr. Shinyo** (Japan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it was unfortunate that the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had raised old issues that were not germane to the agenda item under discussion. The issue had been recognized by his Government on many occasions, including in the joint Pyongyang Declaration by Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and in a statement by the President of Japan in 2005. Japan had consistently contributed to the promotion of peace and security since the Second World War. The numbers mentioned by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic were grossly exaggerated and were unacceptable to his delegation. The unsubstantiated statement made by him could not be used as an excuse

for abductions by that country, which were a clear violation of human rights and a continuing problem.

72. Regarding the reform of the Security Council, which was also irrelevant to the agenda item under consideration, his Government's position was that permanent membership should be based on a Member State's contributions to peace and security. He drew attention to the statement by the Security Council of 8 October 2006 urging the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to implement its resolution 1695 (2006), including returning at an early date to the Six-Party Talks, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

73. **Mr. Sin** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said his delegation had only told the pure and simple truth about its history and urged Japan to act honourably. The Japanese delegation was once again attempting to cover up its blood-stained past and deny and distort its crimes against humanity. He referred to the threat posed by Japan's extreme right, including incitement to hatred of Koreans in Japan. Japan had forcibly abducted 8.4 million Koreans during its occupation of the Korean Peninsula and had forced sexual slavery on 200,000 Korean women and girls.

74. Koreans held a profound grudge against Japan, which must be cancelled with blood. Even today, after more than half a century, the whereabouts of most of those victims remained unknown. Despite Japan's talk about human rights, it had not told the truth about the fate of those victims, nor had it offered a sincere apology or honest compensation. Japan might be rich in terms of material wealth, but it posed a grave threat to the international community because it was extremely poor in terms of morality and ethics.

75. **Mr. Shinyo** (Japan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that what needed to be addressed was the current issue of the abductions of Japanese by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which it could not pretend had not occurred. One should also ask which country posed a grave threat to the international community; the answer was the Democratic People's Republic, in view of its statement the previous day that it had engaged in nuclear testing. Japan, meanwhile, had been promoting the rights of women and children for more than 60 years.

76. **Mr. Sin** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said it was absurd that Japan should claim that its past crimes had been "liquidated". The abduction issue had been totally resolved in the Pyongyang Declaration, which his Government had fully implemented, leaving no outstanding issues. But Japan had unilaterally rejected that Declaration and constantly betrayed it. He reiterated his country's request to Japan, made at the Beijing meeting on 4-8 July, to return disputed ashes for DNA testing, which Japan had so far not granted. Japan was engaging in a malicious cover-up and shirking its obligations. He strongly urged Japan to accept responsibility for past crimes, including military sexual slavery.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/61/SR.10

General Assembly
Sixty-first session

Official Records

Distr.: General
2 November 2006

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 10th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 10 October 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Al-Bayati ..... (Iraq)

Contents

Agenda item 61: Advancement of women (*continued*)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

06-56184 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 61: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/61/283 and 303)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/61/38, 122 and Add.1, 292 and 318)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/61/174)

1. **Ms. Rebello** (India) said that inequality between women and men, and discrimination against women, continued to exist the world over. Greater empowerment of women — socially, economically and politically — was increasingly urgent, and she therefore endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation (A/61/174, para. 77) concerning the integration of gender perspectives in the implementation of and follow-up to major international conferences, as well as in the context of the reform of the United Nations. She hoped that suitable measures would be taken within the United Nations system to address the lack of progress, even regression, in achieving 50/50 gender distribution, especially at the senior and policymaking levels.

2. India paid careful attention to the issue of gender equality, which was enshrined in its Constitution, and to the empowerment of women, which was key to good governance. The Government had recognized the political, legal, educational and economic empowerment of women as a top priority and, through its five-year plans, was committed to enabling women to be equal partners in development. Various initiatives had been introduced, including reserving one third of local-government seats for women, with plans to introduce similar measures in the Indian Parliament; creating self-help groups for rural women, which had contributed to their economic empowerment; reducing the gender gap in literacy; enhancing gender mainstreaming; and setting targets for reducing the female-poverty ratio.

3. She said that the issue of violence against women, which occurred in all countries, should be addressed urgently. Her country attached great importance to that issue: legislation on domestic violence had been passed in 2005, and legislation on the prevention of sexual harassment of women at work was under consideration, to supplement existing case-law.

4. Measures had also been taken in the area of employment, such as guaranteeing to every rural household a minimum amount of work. At least one third of beneficiaries would be women. The number of women entrepreneurs had risen above 10 per cent, and initiatives were being introduced to increase the figure further, including the establishment of a standing committee on women and the provision of financial assistance to women entrepreneurs. Another major initiative to advance gender equality was the institutionalization of gender-sensitive budgeting.

5. Her country had also responded to the Secretary-General's call for increased representation of female personnel in United Nations peacekeeping operations, and had been contributing women military personnel and police officers, including in conflict and post-conflict societies.

6. **Mr. Cumberbatch Miguén** (Cuba) expressed concern that, despite all the work being carried out by the United Nations in the area of promotion of gender equality, the objectives set out in the Beijing Platform for Action remained out of reach for the majority of women. The reason was simple: neoliberal globalization, in the context of an unjust world order, not only increased the gap between rich and poor but also brought with it the humiliating feminization of poverty. Women were the most frequent victims of domestic violence, human trafficking and forced prostitution. Much remained to be done to promote the advancement of women, but that required real political will.

7. National efforts, particularly in developing countries, must be supplemented by equitable international cooperation in a climate of respect for sovereignty and independence, rather than interference in States' domestic affairs. His country attached great importance to combating gender discrimination and promoting the empowerment of women, and had made considerable achievements in that area. Women constituted almost half the total workforce in Cuba, and his country had the seventh highest proportion of women parliamentarians in the world. Over one third of management posts were occupied by women — a proportion that outstripped most other countries. Women also accounted for a high proportion of judicial

posts, and for almost half the workers active in Cuba's cooperation projects with developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Cuba's achievements in promoting the advancement of women had been recognized at the recent session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

8. Those achievements had been brought about despite the unjust economic, trade and financial blockade imposed on his country by the United States of America, which constituted a grave form of violence against Cuban women. That violence was not only physical and material but also psychological. Cuba had shown how much could be achieved by a small, poor country when there was genuine political will. The shortcomings that remained with regard to the full achievement of gender equality would be addressed. Cuba attached importance to its ongoing fulfilment of international commitments and its implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

9. **Ms. Aliyeva** (Azerbaijan) welcomed the focus on the critical issue of violence against women, which was a major form of discrimination and a human rights violation, and commended the study carried out in that area (A/61/122 and Add.1), and its recommendations. Slow and uneven progress had been made in addressing the problem, partly owing to its roots in existing discriminatory societal and cultural attitudes, and in inequality. Political will and commitment were required at the highest level for eliminating discriminatory attitudes and ensuring economic empowerment of women, which was crucial for preventing gender-based violence. However, the implementation of the relevant international human rights commitments had been far from adequate. It would be useful to publicize the study at the national level and to translate its summary and recommendations into national languages. She called upon the relevant United Nations bodies to support that endeavour.

10. Various initiatives were being implemented in Azerbaijan to eliminate violence against women, which was especially acute in some rural areas and among the refugees and internally displaced persons forced to flee by the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. Various strategies to eliminate such violence had been incorporated into the national gender policy; relevant domestic legislation was being strengthened; and the Penal Code had been revised to incorporate new articles relating to rape, sexual harassment and trafficking in women. Other practical measures were being introduced, with the cooperation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including the training of law enforcement, judicial, medical and other personnel; counselling services; and sheltering of victims of violence and trafficking. Much remained to be done, however.

11. Economic inequality and vulnerability were among the root causes of violence and discrimination against women, and the issue of gender-based violence had therefore been included in the new national programme for poverty reduction and sustainable development. Furthermore, the new national employment strategy envisaged measures to promote women's employment and entrepreneurship. Special focus was placed on young women, women in rural areas, women refugees and internally displaced persons.

12. She expressed her appreciation for the work carried out on the ground by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in fostering various aspects of gender equality and empowerment of women, and ho[illegible]d that its presence could be reinforced.

13. **Ms. Kang** Kum-sil (Republic of Korea) said that the advancement of women and women's rights was not only a goal in itself; it was an essential component of prosperous human societies and the promotion of all human rights. She therefore commended the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122 and Add.1). She had taken note of his specific remarks on multiple forms of discrimination against women on grounds of race, sexual preference, disability and migrant status. The Government had taken measures to ensure that migrant women had direct access to remedies in the event of domestic violence or sexual harassment at work. In addition, an inter-agency consultation mechanism had been established to devise a support programme for immigrant women. The Republic of Korea was also at the forefront of the issue of women with disabilities, and had supported its inclusion as a separate article in the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the draft text of which had recently been finalized.

14. Women must be included in decision-making, especially at the managerial level, in order to advance their status in practice. One striking example of

progress was the recent election of Prime Minister Han Myeong-sook, the first woman to hold that office. Efforts had also been made to enhance women's roles in traditionally marginalized areas such as public enterprise, particularly in the fields of science and engineering.

15. Her country remained committed to the empowerment of women throughout the world and the advancement of their status by achieving the full spectrum of human rights.

16. **Mr. Hannesson** (Iceland) said that efforts must continue to be made to ensure implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. He welcomed the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122 and Add.1), which showed that levels of violence against women were serious, pervasive and persistent. Violence against women was both a human rights violation and a crime. He agreed that States had responsibility for preventing violence against women and must establish effective mechanisms for its punishment. As long as violence against women continued, it was impossible to make claims of progress towards equality, development and peace. Violence against women should be seen as a human rights crisis, particularly in view of the use of rape and sexual violence as a systematic weapon of war, which the international community must address with greater vigour.

17. Efforts were needed to combat human trafficking, which affected all States, and whose victims were mostly women and girls. His country had emphasized the role of regional institutions in addressing that problem, and had contributed actively to the work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in that area.

18. His country attached great importance to the work of UNIFEM, which it believed should be given more weight in the United Nations system. Iceland also continued to strongly support implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. He stressed his country's commitment to the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, both of which it had ratified. He urged all States that had not done so to ratify or accede to those instruments.

19. **Ms. Faye** (Senegal) said that it was generally acknowledged that sustainable development and poverty reduction could not be fully achieved unless gender inequality were eliminated; the advancement of women was necessarily linked to economic growth and development. In Senegal, therefore, efforts were being made to integrate women into development, with actions designed to improve their situation, generate income and ease the burden of their domestic work. Education, the enabler of social change, had improved their lives: there was increased enrolment of girls in schools and their greater involvement in devising curricula.

20. Senegal's poverty-reduction strategy encompassed social and human components designed to strengthen political will for behavioural change; develop a collective consciousness to reject violence against women or children; disseminate social and cultural values to combat unsafe sex practices; foster positive discrimination for disadvantaged groups; eliminate gender stereotypes from textbooks; increase women's participation in political life and decision-making; and eliminate gender stereotyping in the upbringing of young girls. In the area of women's reproductive health, some progress had been made, particularly in the reduction of taboos related to pregnancy, social stigmatization of rape, and violence against women.

21. The Government encouraged the participation of women in the work of international bodies. The number of women parliamentarians in Senegal had increased, and women were also well represented at the local-government level.

22. Despite the active promotion of good governance, however, and greater equality of rights and opportunities of women and men, more needed to be done to change attitudes in order to ensure gender equality by 2015. Her Government would continue efforts to achieve that goal.

23. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that gender equality and the advancement of women were enshrined in her country's Constitution and its development policy. Her Government complied with the Beijing Platform for Action and the Declaration issued by the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, as it viewed gender equality as essential for sustainable development.

24. With regard to the study on violence against women (A/61/122 and Add.1), her delegation would

have wished to see more emphasis on the consequences of war and foreign occupation for women, as they were almost always its first victims.

25. Her Government's current development plan included measures to reduce the gender gap in education and employment and to increase women's participation in the legislature. The Syrian Arab Republic had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and had submitted its initial report. A national committee on violence against women had been established, as well as a number of NGOs working for women's economic, political and cultural advancement.

26. Her Government also provided support to women in the Syrian Arab Golan living under Israeli occupation, who were denied their basic right to education, health and employment. Guaranteeing the rights of women living under foreign occupation was essential.

27. **Ms. Bernardi** (San Marino) said that her Government had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and had become a party to its Optional Protocol in 2005. Women in San Marino had achieved a significant level of participation in the electorate, and held over 10 per cent of seats in Parliament, along with two Cabinet posts. Women's high-ranking participation in the public and private sectors of the economy was significant, and wage equality was in line with ILO conventions. New legislation provided for parental leave after childbirth and in the case of a child's illness. In addition, since November 2003, women in San Marino had finally been able to transmit their nationality to their children.

28. The United Nations could play a central role in removing gender inequalities and in redefining the traditional rules of society that limited women's equality and freedom. Her delegation supported the proposal to appoint a special adviser to review the implementation of legislation criminalizing all forms of violence against women.

29. Over the past few decades, significant progress had been made, with the participation of women, in the eradication of poverty, marginalization, discrimination and exploitation, and women had also attempted to bridge the gap between North and South. The fight for the protection of human rights, especially of women and girls, must continue.

30. **Mr. Chew** (Singapore) said that Singapore did not tolerate violence against women. As a small country, it had long since realized that it would go only as far as its human resources would take it, and women represented half its human capital. An amendment to the Women's Charter had expanded the definition of family violence to include emotional and psychological harm, and courts could issue protection orders based on the probability that violence had occurred or would occur, rather than having to prove it beyond a reasonable doubt, hoping thereby to encourage victims to seek help and protection.

31. Violence was a complex problem that required a coordinated and cross-cutting approach. To that end, Singapore had created a family-violence dialogue group, comprising representatives of the relevant ministries, the police, courts, prisons and social-service agencies. At the operational level, a family-violence networking system provided multiple access points where victims could get help. The Government also supported specialized services for women and crisis shelters for victims. Singapore was also active in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, aiming to raise awareness of and prevent violence against women.

32. **Ms. Abubaker** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that women in her country were making progress in such areas as education, health and human rights, but still lacked equal access to decision-making; political will would be required to change that situation.

33. To combat violence against women, girls must be educated to expect equality and to know their human rights. Her delegation was concerned at the deterioration of the situation of women in Africa as a result of war, lack of development and the spread of HIV/AIDS. She also drew attention to the situation of Palestinian women living under Israeli occupation. The international community must take action to bring an end to the practices which affected their basic human rights. Her Government condemned trafficking in women and urged the States to work to end that scourge by criminalizing it in their legislation.

34. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya would implement the Beijing Platform for Action in its development policy. It had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol. It had also passed legislation to put an end to traditional practices that

discriminated against women. It encouraged women's participation in decision-making and in all areas of society and State institutions.

35. **Ms. Stewart** (Canada), speaking also on behalf of Australia and New Zealand, said that work was still required to make the Beijing Platform for Action effective. The Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women (A/61/122 and Add.1) indicated that there had been little progress in that area. Sustained political will at the highest levels and substantial reallocation of resources to eradicate such violence was still lacking. Empowerment of women through their increased participation in decision-making and equal access to and control over resources were essential to transform societal attitudes towards violence against women.

36. The study closely corroborated a central finding of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women: there was an urgent need for a comprehensive and systematic collection and analysis of data on the scope and extent of gender-based violence. Limited availability of such data did not lessen the obligation of States to eradicate such violence; it was, however, essential to provide for more effective policies and practices for its prevention and elimination.

37. The three delegations commended the work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, who had advanced the understanding of the due-diligence standard as a tool for eliminating gender-based violence. They also commended UNIFEM, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Division for the Advancement of Women for the important work accomplished in favour of gender equality and women's rights despite many challenges. The international community needed a stronger, better-resourced and more coordinated approach in that area. Those delegations supported a strong voice for women at the United Nations and called for robust and well-supported structures to be put in place.

38. Canada, Australia and New Zealand reaffirmed their unqualified commitment and support for the full and urgent implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, and looked forward to applying it to the work of the new Peacebuilding Commission. Those delegations were dismayed to learn that both in the United Nations system and in the Secretariat the representation of women in the Professional and higher categories had remained static, and in some cases had decreased. The lack of progress required a review of current policies in order to meet gender-balance targets and to make credible the commitment of programme managers to that mandate.

39. Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was fundamental to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and to the promotion and protection of the rights of women around the world. Over 90 per cent of Member States were now party to the Convention. All remaining States should ratify or accede to the Convention as a matter of the highest priority.

40. **Ms. Al-Dikheel** (Kuwait) said that the struggle against gender discrimination was an ongoing challenge for contemporary societies. Kuwait's Constitution prohibited discrimination on any basis, including gender. Kuwait's accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1994 demonstrated the importance it attached to the issue. Since then, it had submitted four reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

41. In recent years, Kuwait had achieved a decrease in the female illiteracy rate, in particular among young women, and an increase in the percentage of girls enrolled in education at all levels. Women had participated as voters and candidates in local and parliamentary elections. In the latter, more women had voted than men in some districts. The previous year had seen the appointment of the first Kuwaiti woman minister. Women held over 10 per cent of high administrative posts, reflecting a dramatic increase over the past decade. Kuwait's leadership was exhibiting the political will called for in the Secretary-General's study on violence against women (A/61/122 and Add.1), which sprang from the values of Kuwaiti society and the teachings of Islam.

42. **Ms. Otani** (Japan) said that Japan had revised its plan for gender equality to encourage greater participation of women in such new areas as the environment and disaster prevention and recovery. One of its targets, moreover, was for women to hold at least 30 per cent of leadership positions in all areas of society by 2020. It had also revised the law on equal employment opportunity to expand prohibition of

gender discrimination. It was also active on the regional level in efforts to promote gender equality.

43. Her Government welcomed the Secretary-General's study on violence against women (A/61/122 and Add.1) and hoped that all relevant mechanisms within the United Nation system would work towards implementation of programmes in that area. Japan had revised its laws on domestic violence, and local governments had established counselling and support centres for victims. It had also adopted a national plan of action to combat trafficking in persons, and was cooperating closely with the Philippines, Thailand, Colombia, Indonesia and the Russian Federation to discuss measures and share information.

44. Based on its initiative on gender and development, Japan was working to integrate a gender-equality perspective into every area of implementation of its official development assistance. Through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, it had supported initiatives to enhance women's lives in many parts of the world, including Timor-Leste and Afghanistan. It reaffirmed its commitment to achieving gender equality within and outside Japan, working in close partnership with international organizations and civil society.

45. **Ms. Banzon** (Philippines) said that the key components of the Philippines' framework plan for women were the promotion of women's rights, women's economic development and gender-responsive governance. Legislative advances included the commutation of the death sentences of prisoners, including 27 women, as a result of the abolition of capital punishment; gender-sensitive handling of violence-against-women cases; and the introduction of legislation on gender equality. Women's employment and entrepreneurship were being promoted as part of the fight against women's poverty, and credit assistance and business training had helped many poor women become self-reliant.

46. In the spirit of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, the Government had supported participation by women in community development in peace and development programmes in conflict areas. Sex role stereotyping had been addressed by laws and policies promoting shared parenting and egalitarian relationships, and school textbooks conveyed gender-fair values and images. The Department of Labour was encouraging women's involvement in union activities, monitoring compliance with the Anti-Sexual-Harassment Law, and ensuring that women migrant workers were protected from discrimination and exploitation. Efforts were being made to increase the already rising number of women holding elective positions in order to enhance their participation in political decision-making.

47. She said it was eye-opening to learn from the Secretary-General's report on the status of women in the United Nations system (A/61/318) of the gaps in gender sensitivity within the United Nations. She appreciated the study on violence against women, and said that her delegation was studying pragmatic ways of operationalizing its recommendations.

48. **Ms. Bowen** (Jamaica) said that while Jamaicans were elated at the emergence earlier in the year of a woman as their Prime Minister, the fact that the rise of women to high political positions was still a novelty highlighted the need for more progress. The study on violence against women had illustrated the global nature of that phenomenon, which the Government was addressing through legislation and public education. Jamaica was also awaiting the findings of the studies of the issue being conducted by the Caribbean Regional Commission on Gender-based Violence that had been alluded to by the representative of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

49. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women needed to be the starting point for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Developing countries in particular needed to be assisted in translating their commitment to the Convention to action on the national level. Jamaica was preparing to accede to the Optional Protocol and to submit its sixth periodic report to the Committee. Jamaica recognized that gender mainstreaming needed to be accompanied by political will, and was establishing a multisectoral national gender policy to enhance gender mainstreaming at the structural level.

50. **Mr. Al-Sadah** (Yemen) said that Yemen had made much progress in gender equality and women's rights owing to the efforts of national women's institutions, as well as to the enshrinement of women's rights in the Constitution. Women's participation in the political process was no mere slogan in Yemen. There were two women ministers in the Government and a

number of women served as ministry officials. There were also women serving in Parliament, local councils, the judiciary, the diplomatic corps and the police. Women participated in the democratic process as voters, candidates and political party members. International observers had noted the outstanding participation of women in Yemen's recent presidential election. Basic education for girls in Yemen was now free of charge, and the proportion of women in the labour force was approximately one quarter. Increasing attention was paid to the health of mothers and children, and the Ministry of Health had prohibited government hospitals from performing female genital mutilation. Lastly, he reaffirmed his country's commitment to international instruments on women's rights and its conviction that there could be no sustainable development without participation by women and men on an equal footing.

51. **Mr. Kadiri** (Morocco) said that the harmonization of Moroccan legislation with the international human-rights instruments ratified by Morocco was a priority of his Government. The code on Public Freedoms had been amended, and new legislation on prisons had been enacted to safeguard the physical and mental health of women and guarantee their rights. A new Code of Penal Procedure enshrined the presumption of innocence and other important principles, as well as recognition of the supremacy of international conventions over domestic legislation.

52. The Penal Code had been amended to criminalize trafficking, prostitution and child pornography, sexual harassment and violence against women. It also criminalized torture, in accordance with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In a historic development, Morocco had adopted a family code, so as to enable women to become integrated into modern life and strengthen their contribution to the progress and development of the country. The Family Code provided for the creation of new structures, including a family court system. Moreover, the Government had decided that children born to a Moroccan woman married to a foreigner would be entitled to Moroccan nationality.

53. Morocco had recently adopted a national strategy for gender mainstreaming in development policies and programmes and for ensuring coordination between stakeholders, taking into account the Millennium Development Goals and the Beijing Platform for Action. Moreover, the Government had recently inaugurated a national observatory to combat violence against women, to provide orientation, coordination, follow-up and evaluation in connection with national policies aimed at ensuring full respect for the dignity of women. Moroccan NGOs also played a key role in the advancement of women, including involvement in programmes benefiting women and girls in rural areas.

54. Morocco would review its reservations and declarations with respect to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and would consider the possibility of acceding to the Optional Protocol. In parallel, NGOs had launched a regional campaign for the removal of reservations to the Convention and for accession to the Optional Protocol.

55. **Mr. Kapoma** (Zambia) said that gender mainstreaming was an urgent priority in Zambia's policies for both poverty reduction and sustainable development. Zambia's poverty-reduction strategy paper included policies that enhanced the participation of men and women in all spheres of life and its current national development plan contained strategies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. An institutional framework for gender mainstreaming had been established and the national gender policy was being operationalized through a strategic plan of action. But there was still insufficient institutional capacity to implement gender-related activities.

56. Violence against women was linked to both patriarchal beliefs and socio-economic status. Zambia remained committed to the 1997 Declaration on Gender and Development adopted by the Southern African Development Community and the 1998 Addendum on the eradication of violence against women and children. It welcomed the recommendations for action at the national level in the Secretary-General's study on violence against women (A/61/122 and Add.1), and hoped that regional bodies would make resources available to implement them. Given the relatively high rate of HIV/AIDS infection among women, Zambia was also incorporating gender-responsive practices into its national HIV/AIDS strategy. Zambia had made tremendous progress towards gender parity in primary education in line with the Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education by 2015. He further

reiterated his Government's support for the goals set out in the Beijing Platform for Action.

57. **Mr. Uras** (Turkey) said that Turkey was pursuing a comprehensive legal and social strategy to curtail violence against women. The Law on the Protection of the Family facilitated the lodging of complaints by victims and included precautionary measures to ensure their protection; violation of those measures was punishable by imprisonment. The new Penal Code abolished any mitigating clause in the case of honour killings; perpetrators were to be given the highest possible sentences. The new Law on Municipalities provided for the establishment of shelters for women who had suffered or were at risk of suffering violence.

58. Educational and awareness-raising programmes concerning violence against women were also being implemented, especially for security forces and health-care personnel, and several video spots had been prepared in cooperation with NGOs. The latter were also conducting research studies on violence and developing problem-solving strategies that included counselling services and shelter for victims. Guidance and counselling services were also being offered by the provincial and municipal authorities.

59. **Ms. Moreno** (United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)) said that the Institute sought to mainstream the issue of violence against women in its activities, including in the areas of women's migration; gender, peace and security; and governance and women's political participation. Within that framework, it was carrying out several projects. As part of the project on violence against women and public security, it had developed a manual and a training tool for improving the response to violence against women by public security institutions. It had also begun a series of national case studies on gender and the security sector, beginning with the Dominican Republic, with the aim of identifying gender entry points, challenges to women's participation, and good practices within the police, military, judicial and penal systems as well as civil society. In addition, INSTRAW had just released a manual entitled "Securing Equality, Engendering Peace: A guide to policy and planning on women, peace and security", to assist in the formulation of national action plans under Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

60. The Institute would continue to participate in efforts to eliminate violence against women, thanks to support from the General Assembly and to the commitment of donor countries. The Institute had achieved important results in its work on migration, gender, remittances and development, on which it was promoting a gender perspective. In other strategic areas, it had produced seven research studies, four manuals, three databases and a number of other materials and methodologies, including a web portal on women's political participation.

61. **Ms. Çağar** (United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that the Fund worked to ensure that addressing violence against women and girls was an integral part of the sexual and reproductive-health programmes it supported. The Fund fully agreed with the recommendation in the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/122/Add.1, para. 402) that entities of the United Nations system and all other donors should provide increased resources for the implementation of comprehensive national action plans aimed at preventing and eliminating violence against women, particularly in the least developed countries and in countries emerging from conflict. The Fund was prepared to intensify work within the United Nations country teams to that end.

62. UNFPA agreed that launching national campaigns to reduce violence against women would contribute to improving the well-being of millions of people and to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Over the years, the Fund had made progress, together with partners, in bringing national laws into compliance with international standards; in providing a range of services to victims; in training and sensitizing police, justice officials, armed forces and United Nations peacekeepers; in reaching out to men; in combating harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage; and in promoting gender equality and zero tolerance of violence against women. The Fund had worked with partners in every region of the world and had experience from which to build a more coordinated and effective response. Significant progress had been made, for example, in Africa, Asia, Central Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean. In dozens of countries, laws that discriminated against women had been replaced with new laws that upheld women's rights.

63. The Fund agreed with the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report (ibid., para. 400) on the

need to strengthen data collection and research to guide legislative, policy and programme development, monitoring and evaluation. The Fund would continue to work within the United Nations system and with Governments to develop statistical capacity and coherence.

64. **Ms. Strauss** (International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that the empowerment of migrant women was a key step in promoting the advancement of women. She drew attention to a joint IOM/UNFPA expert workshop on female migrants, held in New York in May 2006.

65. The workshop had recommended, inter alia, that: (a) research should be conducted in countries of origin and destination on sectors affected by the brain drain, and that networking of professionals between countries of origin and destination should be promoted, together with the establishing of exchange programmes for professionals; (b) basic human-rights protection must be afforded to female migrants in countries of transit; (c) Governments should provide financial-literacy training for female migrants who were sending or receiving remittances; (d) countries of destination should help create an enabling environment for female migrants; (e) labour laws, conventions and treaties on female migration should be respected, and aid should be provided to trafficked and smuggled female migrants; (f) coordination of national ministries involved in migration was essential for a coherent approach to the protection of female migrants; (g) countries of origin and destination must engage in dialogue to assess the needs of their labour markets, and should conclude agreements to allow for the portability of migrants' social security; (h) countries of origin should provide support for the reintegration of returning female migrants; and (i) countries of origin, transit and destination, should engage in networking and dialogue with a view to effective migration management.

66. The implementation of those recommendations would be particularly beneficial to female migrants. IOM was cooperating with a number of countries to help implement them through a variety of means, including grass-roots programmes and projects.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/61/SR.11

General Assembly
Sixty-first session

Official Records

Distr.: General
7 November 2006

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 11th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 10 October 2006, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Al-Bayati ..... (Iraq)
later: :Mr. Faati (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Gambia)

Contents

Agenda item 60: Social development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*)

(d) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*)

Agenda item 98: Crime prevention and criminal justice (*continued*)

Agenda item 99: International drug control (*continued*)

Agenda item 61: Advancement of women (*continued*)

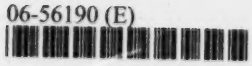
(a) Advancement of women (*continued*)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

06-56190 (E)



The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 60: Social development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/C.3/61/L.5)

Draft resolution A/C.3/61/L.5: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

1. **Ms. Hoosen** (South Africa), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that it highlighted three core priorities of social development: poverty eradication, full employment and social integration. Recognizing that progress towards the goals announced at Copenhagen had been slow and uneven, the draft devoted special attention to the goal of poverty eradication and to strengthening the role of the Commission for Social Development for the follow-up and review process and called for increased support for the work of the Commission.

2. The draft emphasized that poverty eradication policies should address the root and structural causes of poverty, that gender inequality was an obstacle to people-centred development and that an enabling environment was a prerequisite for social development. It reaffirmed that international cooperation was essential for contributing to national efforts to implement the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and welcomed innovative financing mechanisms for funding development.

3. The draft text had undergone changes since its original circulation; she would therefore like to make the following oral revisions: the word "should" in the first line of paragraph 15 had been replaced by the word "shall", and the acronym "UNITAID" had been inserted in the eighth line of paragraph 17 after the words "Drug Purchase Facility". In conclusion, she hoped that the usual cooperative spirit would prevail and that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

(d) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/C.3/61/L.6)

Draft resolution A/C.3/61/L.6: Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing

4. **Ms. Hoosen** (South Africa), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the original sponsors, the Group of 77 and China, and the Russian Federation, said it aimed to strengthen national capacity to deal with issues of ageing and called for greater international support for national efforts to implement the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. The draft resolution further called for a bottom-up approach to the review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan and encouraged consultation of older persons, with the particular aim of eradicating poverty among the elderly. It also invited Governments to designate focal points on ageing and called on the international community to provide adequate support for research on ageing and for boosting the United Nations Trust Fund for Ageing. The sponsors hoped that the usual cooperative spirit would prevail and that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

Agenda item 98: Crime prevention and criminal justice (*continued*) (A/C.3/61/L.7, A/C.3/61/L.9, A/C.3/61/L.2 and A/C.3/61/L.3)

Draft resolution A/C.3/61/L.7: Improving the coordination of efforts against slavery and trafficking in persons

5. **Mr. Dapkiunas** (Belarus), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the original sponsors and Ecuador, said that millions of trafficked human beings, mainly women and children, were denied their basic human rights on a daily basis. That problem, one of extreme concern to the international community, called for a coordinated response through global partnerships between Governments and civil society, under the aegis of the United Nations. The draft resolution proposed, among other things, the creation of an inter-agency working group on trafficking in persons, which would serve as a mechanism for streamlining the efforts of the

international community without incurring additional expenditure for the United Nations. Adoption of the draft resolution would send the strong political and deeply humane message that the international community was determined to eliminate the problem.

Draft resolution A/C.3/61/L.9: Strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity

6. **Ms. Zarra** (Italy), introducing the draft resolution, said that Benin, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Morocco, Nigeria and Panama had become sponsors. Her delegation had wished to see the General Assembly play a more action-oriented role to improve the activities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) relating to crime, with a resolution that underscored the true added value to those activities. The draft took note of the report of the Secretary-General on Strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity (A/61/179).

7. Her delegation sought to "biennialize" the omnibus draft resolution in order to streamline the work of the General Assembly, in the belief that the General Assembly would be better placed every two years, instead of annually, to assess steps taken, thus avoiding the need for an annual discussion of the omnibus resolution containing the same consolidated language. The draft resolution was therefore structurally different from its predecessors, including General Assembly resolution 60/175, and postponed a comprehensive assessment of the issue until 2007. At the same time, it recalled some of the most relevant new developments of the previous year and incorporated essential concepts. Her delegation was open to contributions and suggestions, on condition that they would not modify the new tenor and structure of the draft resolution.

Agenda item 99: International drug control (*continued*) (A/C.3/61/L.8)

Draft resolution A/C.3/61/L.8: International cooperation against the world drug problem

8. **Ms. Feller** (Mexico), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the original sponsors, as well as Ghana, Morocco and Nigeria, said that drug trafficking and drug consumption continued to have a devastating effect on development and stability. The draft resolution was more proactive than the previous one in 2005 and was based on the need for greater international cooperation and coordination. She thanked all delegations that had submitted additional proposals that had been added to the text and hoped that the final version would be adopted by consensus.

9. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) recalled the statement made at the Committee's fifth meeting by the representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in which he had announced that UNODC might take part in a peacekeeping mission planned for the Sudan under United Nations auspices. His delegation had immediately requested that the reference should be deleted from the statement, on the ground that it exceeded the UNODC mandate and pointed to its politicization.

10. At the representative's suggestion, he had met privately with him two days previously and received an apology and a promise that a representative of the Office would appear before the Committee to request removal of the reference. To date, however, no such representative had appeared, thus calling into question the credibility of the Office and prompting the Sudan to rethink its cooperation with UNODC, pending clarification of the matter. The Sudan would do all in its power to prevent UNODC from exceeding its specific mandate and politicizing the Office.

11. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) assured the representative of the Sudan that, in the absence of a representative of UNODC, his statement would be conveyed to the Office.

Agenda item 61: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/61/283 and A/61/303)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/61/38, A/61/122 and Add.1, A/61/318 and A/61/292)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/61/174)

12. **Mr. Petranto** (Indonesia) said that the limited references to the gender perspective in the work of most of the Main Committees of the General Assembly clearly indicated that stereotypes and segregation

remained challenges, increasing the gender deficit in various male-dominated areas of United Nations work. It was generally recognized that gender mainstreaming was a cross-cutting issue, and United Nations bodies should give it due emphasis. His delegation therefore endorsed the idea that the recently established subsidiary bodies should pay closer attention to gender perspectives, and they should do so while they were still in the early stages of developing their working methods.

13. Persuaded that progress for women constituted progress for all, his country's State Ministry for Women's Empowerment had been intensifying implementation of relevant national policies. Gender-equality programmes had been conducted in seven Indonesian provinces, with the participation of four community-based organizations and the mass media. The programmes had covered networking, capacity-building and advocacy for gender-responsive policies and formed part of a long-term national policy that would eventually cover all 33 provinces. Drawing lessons from the 2004 tsunami, the Government, in collaboration with other stakeholders, had promptly applied gender-sensitive humanitarian measures, following a series of earthquakes and tsunamis in Central and West Java. Those measures had dealt with the specific needs of women, including the provision of sanitation, clean water and reproductive health and counselling. In that connection, he expressed his delegation's gratitude to the international community for its generous support for the victims of the May 2006 Yogyakarta earthquake.

14. Indonesia had also been upgrading the legal protections available to female migrant workers, who accounted for some 77 per cent of the 2.1 million Indonesian migrant workers abroad. A special inter-ministerial agency had been created to monitor migrant workers abroad, as well as improved practical arrangements under a "one-roof" service to streamline the recruitment, pre-departure and return system. Advocacy and capacity-building were also being carried out among all social groups in an effort to increase awareness of trafficking issues and the commitment to anti-trafficking activities. Indonesia advocated the adoption of similar measures in countries of destination, possibly through agreements with concerned countries on mandatory consular notification to assist women migrant workers in difficulty. There was a need for partnerships in which member countries fulfilled responsibilities as mandated by the relevant internationally agreed development goals.

15. **Ms. Hastaie** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the situation for women was particularly difficult in countries emerging from war and armed conflict, with lack of education and information hindering women's access to health care. Prostitution and pornography were serious forms of violence against women and girls. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran paid particular attention to vulnerable groups of women, such as rural and urban poor women and female heads of households. Much progress had been made in increasing women's access to health, education and job opportunities. Protection and well-being of families were Government priorities. Great progress had been made in improving access for women and girls to education, and Iranian women were quite active in various fields of science.

16. **Ms. Southichack** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Political Declaration at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly constituted an important landmark in the promotion of women's development, gender equality and peace. Her Government's Constitution clearly set forth the responsibilities of the public sector, society and the family for the advancement of women. Legislation had been adopted to protect the rights and interests of women; promote women's education and training and gender equality; eliminate all forms of discrimination against women; and prevent and combat trafficking in and violence against women and children, thus creating conditions conducive to women's participation and empowerment in national defence and development.

17. Her Government had established a National Commission for the Advancement of Women to formulate policies and coordinate the activities of the relevant national and international organizations in the implementation of its national gender equality policy. Gender-disaggregated data had been introduced into the national statistics centre. The Lao Women's Union and the National Commission played an important role in promoting the full participation of women in the planning and implementation of her Government's poverty reduction strategy. A plan of action had been developed to ensure basic education for all in an effort

to address the issue of illiteracy and the existing gender disparities in the education sector, which had resulted in an increase in literacy levels and school enrolment. The quality of life of Lao people had been improved, including a decrease in maternal and infant mortality. Her Government had been implementing a birth spacing and safe motherhood project, among other women's programmes.

18. Women occupied leadership positions at all levels. The number of women in the National Assembly had increased by four in 2006, to 29. She noted in particular that a woman from the Hmong ethnic group was serving as Vice-President of the National Assembly. Furthermore there were two women ministers in the Cabinet. To address the traditional beliefs and ancient stereotypes which regarded men as superior to women in Lao society, her Government was making every effort to mainstream gender concerns in Government institutions and mass organizations and to implement the Millennium Development Goals, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

19. **Ms. Cavaliere de Nava** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that one of her Government policies' main objectives was the eradication of poverty. Promoting the rights of women and combating discrimination took on special meaning in that context. One particularly important element of her Government's gender approach involved the recognition under the Constitution of the economic value of housework and guarantee of social security for women who stayed at home. There was also legislation on equal opportunities for women and violence against women and the family.

20. At the administrative and political level, the national women's institute INAMUJER provided information and training on women's rights and worked to change stereotypes and discriminatory practices. Education and training for women were essential tools for achieving effective women's participation in public life and combating discrimination and the exclusion of women. Free education was available at all levels, without discrimination, which was reflected in school enrolment, more than half of which comprised women and girls.

21. The Secretary-General's report was comprehensive and useful. Her delegation agreed that violence against women required political will at all levels. The Venezuelan Government had therefore established a hotline for victims of violence and adopted a cross-cutting gender approach to its policies on health, employment, credit and other areas. It condemned violence against women in all its manifestations, including violence against migrant workers, trafficking in women and girls, traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls, crime committed in the name of honour and domestic violence against women.

22. Because social and economic development was essential for the development of women, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela opposed any measures which hampered such efforts, in particular unilateral coercive measures. Her delegation emphasized the importance of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly as well as the role played by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

23. **Ms. G/Mariam** (Ethiopia) noted with regret that the goal of gender equality at the United Nations remained far from being achieved, and stressed that ensuring gender equality was crucial for the achievement of development goals. The recommendations in the relevant reports of the Secretary-General were therefore of paramount importance and must be accompanied by adequate support to countries with the most disadvantaged women populations.

24. Ethiopia remained committed to the achievement of gender equality in line with the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration. In the education sector, primary and secondary school enrolment of girls had increased, as had the number of female students in technical and vocational schools. In the health sector, combating HIV/AIDS pandemic had been given high priority, resulting in a decline in new HIV infections. Efforts had also been made to educate the population on the gender dimension of the pandemic. Public awareness programmes had been conducted and anti-retroviral drugs had been provided to mothers living with the virus to prevent mother-to-child transmission. The number of births attended by skilled health professionals had also increased.

25. In the political field, although her Government had not reached the 30 per cent target for women parliamentarians, their numbers had significantly increased. Currently, there were 116 women members of parliament out of a total 547, and the deputy speaker of the House of Representatives was a woman. Women in Ethiopia had been subjected to discriminatory laws which seriously undermined the full enjoyment of their rights. In an effort to change that situation, her Government had revised its family law and the Penal Code to ensure the equality of men and women before the law. Under the revised Penal Code, perpetrators of violence against women such as rape and abduction could receive up to 25 years of rigourous punishment. The new family law had also enabled women to enjoy equal rights with respect to inheritance, divorce and custody of children.

26. Her Government's five-year development plan sought to maximize the potential of Ethiopian women, to narrow the development gap between men and women and increase the participation of women in economic, political and social spheres of life. It also included a gender system analysis in all Government institutions. In conclusion, Ethiopia remained committed to the promotion and protection of the rights of women in an effort to enable them to assume their rightful place.

27. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) said that many Palestinian families had been unable to observe Ramadan traditions owing to the economic blockades and the harsh restrictions on the movement of Palestinian goods and services imposed by the occupying Power. Israel had consistently engaged in the violation of international law, including humanitarian law and human rights law, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in the Gaza Strip. The occupying Power had continued to kill, injure and maim Palestinian civilians, including women and children; to destroy houses, property, vital infrastructure and farmlands; to confiscate land; to construct the expansionist Wall; to build and expand settlements and bypass roads; to arrest, detain and imprison thousands of Palestinians; and to cause the further deterioration of the already dire economic and social conditions of the Palestinian people by restricting the movement of medical and humanitarian assistance throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

28. Palestinian women had borne the brunt of those illegal Israeli policies and undergone constant and merciless harassment and humiliation, violence, terror, punishment and discrimination. Women who traditionally managed the household found themselves compelled to rely on the charity of relatives or international humanitarian organizations. Moreover, when confronted with the painful reality of death or imprisonment of one of their male family members, Palestinian women were forced to face these burdens and responsibilities alone.

29. Restrictions on the movement of people and goods had crippled the Palestinian economy, transforming villages and towns into isolated prisons and resulting in the untimely death of Palestinian women and children. Many pregnant women ready to give birth had been prevented by Israeli occupying forces from crossing checkpoints and receiving proper medical attention. Since September 2006, at least 69 women had been forced to deliver in the back seat of their car or, as one Palestinian woman had sadly recalled, "behind a bush, in the dust, like an animal". The psychological effect on Palestinian women who had undergone such treatment at checkpoints could not be understated.

30. Her Government had established the Ministry of Women's Affairs in 2003 to ensure the mainstreaming of women's rights in all Palestinian Authority institutions and to address all types of violence against women. It was difficult to speak, however, of any real advances when women and indeed the entire Palestinian population were being denied their most basic human rights and the women of Gaza could not even secure basic food commodities such as flour, clean water or even baby formula to feed their children. Nevertheless, Palestinian women continued to strive to achieve their inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination in their own independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The international community must work together to end Israel's 39-year occupation so that Palestinian women and their families might finally lead normal lives.

31. **Ms. Laohaphan** (Thailand) said that her delegation reaffirmed its commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, as well as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Thailand welcomed

the Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women. The United Nations should be an important engine for ending violence against women and its gender mechanisms must be strengthened. The Human Rights Council must give priority to the issue of violence against women and integrate the promotion and protection of women's rights and gender equality into its future work.

32. The relevant bodies addressing gender issues must closely coordinate their work and resources to ensure that the commitments of the international community to promote gender equality were being implemented effectively. In addition, the Peacebuilding Commission must ensure that the victims of gender-based violence in times of conflict were recognized, given redress and equipped with the means to move forward economically, socially and psychologically. It was essential that, once a conflict had ended, women did not again fall victim to stereotypes. The potential role of women as assets and contributors to post-conflict societies must also be fully recognized.

33. Her Government's efforts to end violence against women included the enactment of national legislation to prevent domestic violence, the setting up of crisis centres in several hospitals countrywide to provide medical treatment, and the provision of social welfare and legal advice for victims of gender-based violence with a 24-hour hotline. Non-governmental organizations in Thailand had also taken an active role in protecting and assisting victims of violence. Ending violence against women must begin by changing the attitudes and stereotypical mindset of men and boys, as well as of women and girls. The best place to start was at school. Education could serve to instil awareness of women's human rights, self-confidence among girls and women, and respect for women. There was also a need to employ the media to end gender-based violence and promote gender equality.

34. Her delegation noted with concern the lack of progress in meeting the gender-balance targets of United Nations organizations and encouraged them to accelerate progress towards achieving such a balance. Lastly, the higher prevalence of HIV among women as well as the feminization of migration underscored the urgent need for international action. Women must have full access to medicines and reproductive health programmes. The spread of HIV/AIDS could not be reversed without addressing the feminization of HIV/AIDS.

35. **Ms. Taracena Secaira** (Guatemala) said that while poverty in Guatemala continued to have a feminine, rural and indigenous face, women's economic participation, especially in the informal sector, had increased in the past 10 years. Guatemalan women had increased their participation in the public sphere, namely through the network of Urban and Rural Development Councils, and a number of new women's organizations had been established in the past three years. Guatemala had initiated a series of legislative and institutional reforms, for example, to decrease domestic violence, punish trafficking in persons and discrimination on the basis of gender or ethnic origin and strengthen reproductive health programmes. Efforts had also been made to reduce inequities and poverty, and to achieve economic growth.

36. To deal with the continuing problem of violence against women, an entity for inter-institutional coordination for the development of Guatemalan women had been created in 2004 under the Presidential Secretariat for Women (SEPREM), incorporating matters relating to the security of women on the Government's agenda and providing support to women's organizations. The National Plan for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Violence against Women had been widely disseminated, and a commission composed of representatives of human rights and security institutions, the three branches of Government and the Public Ministry had been created to address feoticide.

37. Guatemala had presented its sixth periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in May 2006 and was evaluating and updating its National Policy for the Promotion and Development of Guatemalan Women in a participative process involving civil society. She commended the work of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), namely the technical support it provided to SEPREM in analysing statistics with a gender perspective. She also welcomed its assistance in HIV/AIDS prevention strategies and in strengthening the participation of women in economic sectors in order to increase their income and decision-making capacity in budgetary and policy matters in their communities.

38. In the light of the work conducted by the High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence, it was particularly important for strong entities dealing with

gender issues and research and training for women to be able to provide assistance to United Nations agencies and Member States. In that regard, both UNIFEM and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) needed to secure resources in line with the responsibilities with which they were entrusted. Lastly, her Government reiterated its offer to host the Non-Aligned Movement's Second Ministerial Meeting on the Advancement of Women in 2007 and would soon specify the date.

39. **Mr. Sadykov** (Kazakhstan) said that his country attached great importance to ensuring that the gender perspective was incorporated into the work and recommendations of the United Nations committees and subsidiary bodies and follow-ups to the High-Level Dialogues on International Migration and Development and the high-level meetings on the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries. He hoped that the Secretary-General's report on the in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122) would give strong impetus to national and global efforts in combating violence against women.

40. Kazakhstan reiterated its commitments to the outcome documents of the 2005 Summit, the Beijing Conference and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century". Kazakhstan's National Commission for Women and Gender Equality had nearly completed a plan of action to improve the status of women in the country, and was taking steps to implement a strategy on gender equality for 2005-2015, which was based on the principles and provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and aimed to ensure the equal distribution of power and influence in society and equal obligations in the family, as well as freedom from gender-based violence. Furthermore, a draft law on domestic violence would be considered by the Parliament of Kazakhstan the following year, and Kazakhstan would soon be presenting its second periodic report on the implementation of the Convention.

41. Maternal, adolescent and child health and the reduction of maternal and child mortality were priority objectives of the State, which aimed to integrate the gender perspective into budget planning, legislation and the development of all social programmes, in line with the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In addition, Kazakhstan had a programme on microcrediting for the period 2005-2007, and $2 million had been allocated to facilitate access to microcredit, benefiting mostly rural women. The Government, together with UNIFEM, was organizing a regional consultation for heads of national women's machineries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), with the participation of representatives of donor-countries and international organizations, to be held in November 2006. Kazakhstan would continue to work in close cooperation with the United Nations and non-governmental organizations to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women.

42. **Mr. Pham Hai Anh** (Viet Nam) said that his country had made considerable progress in the political and economic empowerment of women and mainstreaming gender equality in socio-economic development plans and programmes. To combat the scourge of violence against women, Viet Nam's National Assembly had launched a relevant initiative through its Committee for Social Affairs, and was currently considering a draft law for preventing domestic violence. That draft law focused on education, advocacy, reconciliation and education in the community, and on a series of protection and assistance measures for victims. It also stipulated criminal prosecution for serious acts of violence.

43. The Government was also undertaking measures to effectively deal with trafficking in women and girls. Data for 2005 and the first half of 2006 revealed that a number of relevant cases had been tried in first instance courts, a number of defendants had been prosecuted, and several large-scale cross-border trafficking rings had been disbanded. Efforts were being undertaken to improve the relevant legal framework and implement relevant projects, provide medical check-ups and treatment for victims, assist their reintegration through job training; facilitate their participation in the Viet Nam Women's Union and access to credit; and to protect the legal rights and interests of Vietnamese citizens married to non-nationals through bilateral agreements. Viet Nam also had anti-trafficking agreements with countries such as Australia, Cambodia and China.

44. **Ms. Almadhani** (United Arab Emirates) said that her country was implementing the recommendations and outcomes of all conferences on the advancement of

women, particularly the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The Government had enacted a number of laws which ensured the equality of both sexes in all fields. In addition, women enjoyed special privileges under the Civil Service Law, and had laws in line with international treaties on equal wages and working hours, and regulations on maternity and nursing leave. Furthermore, the Government had recently taken legal measures to allow children of widows and women divorced from non-nationals to be naturalized through their mother. In 2005, the President had issued two new rules to eliminate any gender-based discrimination against working mothers.

45. The United Arab Emirates had established six national mechanisms for the advancement of women and the implementation of the recommendations of the relevant international conferences. It also had legislation in place to protect women, whether citizens or foreign residents, from all forms of violence, including domestic violence, exploitation and trafficking, with severe punishments for perpetrators of such acts. In the context of gender equality and the empowerment of women in decision-making, her country had acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and had, for the first time, appointed female ministers — one under the Ministry of the Economy and Planning and another under the Ministry of Social Affairs — and had promoted a woman to the rank of brigadier in the army.

46. The country's achievements included: high female enrolment in schools; substantially improved maternity care; higher participation of women in the workforce; and increased investment opportunities. The Government continued its efforts to mainstream and promote a culture of gender equality and justice in all its institutions, placing a special emphasis on schools and the media. Finally, with respect to the occupied Palestinian territories and Palestinian women in particular, the United Arab Emirates called upon the international community to provide the necessary support and assistance to the Palestinian people, and to compel Israel to respect the relevant international humanitarian laws, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, relating to the protection of civilians. Lastly, it called for the strengthening of development assistance to developing countries to help them create an enabling environment for the advancement of their societies in general and women in particular.

47. **Mrs. Wamalwa** (Kenya) said that the establishment by the Government of Kenya of a ministry for gender issues and a commission on gender were major steps in the advancement of women. The Government emphasized providing assistance to rural women and ensuring their access to agricultural services and tools in order to enable them to become self-reliant. Kenya had almost achieved gender parity in school enrolment, which was at around 100 per cent, and the dropout rate had been stemmed by allowing pregnant girls to come back to school after giving birth. The highest court in Kenya had recently invoked provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to justify awarding the daughters of a polygamist man who had died intestate equal shares of his estate. That was a milestone in Kenyan jurisprudence.

48. In order to address the relatively low enrolment of women in universities, the Government had recently re-instituted affirmative action. As a result, in 2004, 45 per cent of students admitted to universities in Kenya had been women. The Government had also introduced quotas to boost women's representation in various government bodies and institutions. Women continued to bear the brunt of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. However, modest success had been achieved, with the prevalence rate now less than one third of what it had been in 1999.

49. A new law against violence against women, the Sexual Offences Act, had been introduced in 2006 to eliminate lacunae in the legal regime in Kenya. It defined the crime of violence against women and also addressed stereotypes used to justify such acts. Special desks had been established in police stations dedicated to handling cases of violence against women. In conclusion, she stressed that collective action on the part of Member States, development partners, civil society and other stakeholders was essential in order to build on the gains achieved so far.

50. **Mr. Rokolaqa** (Fiji) said that the Government of Fiji was providing financial support to civil society organizations which aided and sheltered victims of violence. In 1995, the police had adopted a "no drop policy" on all reported cases of domestic violence, which meant that all reports of violence against women

were investigated and cases brought before the Magistrate.

51. After the Beijing Conference, Fiji had committed to encouraging financial institutions to review lending policies and to working towards gender balance at all levels of decision-making. It had also pledged to promote an environment that was free of violence, especially domestic violence, sexual harassment and child abuse. The attainment of gender equality in the eradication of poverty was a priority for Fiji. Much progress had been made in providing access to education to girls.

52. *Mr. Faati (Gambia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

53. **Ms. Abu Alfayn** (Qatar) said international conditions favoured the participation of women in politics. While numerous international conventions had guaranteed the political rights of women, Qatar called for continued efforts aimed at overcoming the obstacles that stood in the way of the integration of women into political life and their election to political office. The individual, regardless of gender or skin colour, was one of the important bases upon which the system of government in Qatar was built and was the focus of the overall economic and social development strategy. Much had been accomplished with regard to achieving equality for women and removing the obstacles that prevented them from exercising their rights. Women had proven their talent and held positions of leadership and distinction in ministries and other government agencies. They served as legislators, senior officials and managers and accounted for a significant share of economic activity.

54. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs, established by royal decree under the leadership of Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misnad, wife of the Emir, was a significant step for women in her country inasmuch as the Council was responsible for implementing a national strategy for the advancement of women. To support the role of the Council, Qatar had enacted the Family Law and established the Family Court, and had taken measures to combat domestic violence and violence against women. Empowering women in various areas of development was vitally important to achieving the desired rate of development. The advancement of women and gender equality was necessary for social justice. In fact, they were the only way to build a just society that offered human, social, economic and cultural security for all.

55. **Mrs. Mladineo** (Croatia) said that the percentage of women in Government in Croatia currently stood at 35 per cent, with 21 per cent in the legislative branch and 61 per cent in the judiciary. Croatia was proud to be one of a small number of countries with a female Foreign Minister.

56. The Croatian Parliament had recently adopted a gender equality policy which implemented the concluding comments by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on Croatia's most recent report. Accordingly, measures were being taken to create equal opportunities in the labour market, introduce gender-sensitive education, increase women's participation in public and political decision-making, suppress all forms of violence against women, advance health care for women and further strengthen institutional mechanisms. Lastly, she stressed that prevention of violence against women was the fundamental precondition for the advancement of gender equality.

57. **Ms. Sanchez de Cruz** (Dominican Republic) said that her country aimed to fully implement the Beijing Platform for Action, and attached great importance to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Those issues, together with those of extreme poverty, HIV/AIDS and primary education, were a priority in the country's policies towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In that context, it had set up a Presidential Commission on the Millennium Development Goals to assess needs, define priorities and identify actions for achieving each of the Goals, and had recently made provision to meet those needs under the national budget. Moreover, the Dominican Republic had been selected by the United Nations as one of seven pilot countries to serve as models for implementing the Goals.

58. Her country, which was the headquarters for the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), fully supported and recognized the importance of the work which the Institute was carrying out, particularly in the areas of gender equality, migration, remittances and development, governance and the political participation of women at the local level, peace and security, and gender as a cross-cutting issue. The Institute had released a number of important

publications, many of which were translated into several languages and complemented the work of other United Nations entities dealing with gender issues. In that respect, States should strengthen and support the Institute and ensure its stability, as it was a crucial tool in the advancement of women.

59. **Ms. Dawaye Ayemu** (Myanmar) said that a number of large and influential NGOs were implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and promoting the development of women in Myanmar. The Government regarded trafficking in women as one of the worst forms of violence against women and had taken all necessary measures against trafficking in human beings, including the adoption of a national plan of action, the enactment of legislation, and bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation. A law against trafficking in persons had been put in place in 2005, which covered sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, servitude and debt bondage. The law prescribed a 10-year minimum sentence to a maximum of life imprisonment for traffickers.

60. In response to the reference in the Secretary-General's report on measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/61/174) to General Assembly resolution 60/233 on human rights in Myanmar, her delegation wished to put on record that the allegations regarding sexual violence against ethnic minority women were fabrications. It was not the policy of the Government to allow or condone sexual violence against women under any circumstances. Accordingly, the full force of the law was rigorously applied against perpetrators in that regard.

61. **Ms. Ndelemani** (Malawi) said that Malawi had ratified and implemented the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, leading to increased safeguards of women's rights. During the current year Malawi had adopted a law criminalizing all forms of violence against women and establishing women and girl friendly victim support clinics in police stations.

62. Legal and human rights literacy presented a challenge to Malawi. It was important to make girls and women aware of their rights, especially those living in remote parts of the country. Various initiatives had been launched to empower women economically, improve their access to productive resources and increase their participation in the labour market. Over time, pregnant women had been gaining increased access to pre- and post-natal services, as well as to antiretroviral drugs, where necessary. However, HIV/AIDS remained a very serious problem.

63. **Mr. Israeli** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Palestine had ignored the roots of prejudice against women in Palestinian society, instead shifting the blame onto Israel. Over a year had elapsed since Israel had left Gaza. However, that gesture had been met with Palestinian terror and the election of Hamas, a terrorist organization. Discrimination against and exploitation of women was a feature of Palestinian society, quite apart from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Palestinian women were the victims of violence, sex crimes and honour killings in increasing numbers.

64. Checkpoints did indeed inconvenience those attempting to cross them, but the checkpoints were the result of a continuous campaign of Palestinian terror. Eight Palestinian women had become suicide bombers, and at least 20 other women had been apprehended on their way to commit similar acts. One Palestinian woman, permitted to go through a checkpoint after complaining of pain, had blown herself up, killing four soldiers and wounding 17 other people, including seven Palestinians. Palestinian terror had consequences for Israeli women. Twelve out of 15 victims in a terrorist attack on a Jerusalem pizzeria five years earlier had been women.

65. **Mr. Rasheed** (Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that everything had to be viewed in the context of the occupation, which was the source of all the problems experienced by the Palestinian people over nearly the last 40 years. The lives of Palestinian women were a constant nightmare of suffering and torture every single day. They were forced out of their homes at gunpoint as their children watched. When pregnant Palestinian women were not permitted through checkpoints, they had to give birth in the open air and were thus robbed of joy even at that important moment. Unilateral disengagement from Gaza by Israel had not been a step forward. It had been disastrous. Gaza was an open-air prison, and no food or medicine could go in or out.

66. **Mr. Israeli** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Israel cared about the plight of Palestinian women, as they were the wives and daughters who would build stable, healthy families and a peaceful future. However, with Hamas in control of the Palestinian Authority, the plight of Palestinian women had not improved. Nonetheless, Israel had not lost hope for a partnership between Israeli and Palestinian women to work together for peace, democracy, freedom and tolerance in the region.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/61/SR.12

General Assembly
Sixty-first session

Official Records

Distr.: General
2 November 2006

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 12th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 11 October 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Al Bayati ..... (Iraq)

Contents

Agenda item 61: Advancement of women (*continued*)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

06-56337 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 61: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/61/283 and 303)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/61/38, 122 and Add.1, 292 and 318)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/61/174)

1. **Ms. Awino** (Uganda) said that the Ugandan Constitution, promulgated in 1995 after the Fourth World Conference on Women, guaranteed gender balance and fair representation of women on all constitutional bodies and women's economic property and maternal and political rights. The Ministry for Gender, Labour and Social Development spearheaded and coordinated the mechanisms for promoting gender equality, including the formulation of gender-sensitive policies, programmes and plans and gender mainstreaming. It had developed a social development sector investment plan to promote social protection, gender equality, equity and human rights for the poor and vulnerable.

2. Her Government was implementing a universal primary education programme and, as of November 2005, a universal secondary education programme aimed at ensuring the attainment of the goals of Education for All. Overall enrolment levels had improved, with girls accounting for 49 per cent of students. Enrolment of girls at public universities was 35 per cent, and 80 per cent of beneficiaries of adult literacy programmes were women. The agricultural extension programme of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries had mobilized and organized rural women, training them in agricultural production, fish farming and record keeping. The Government was also taking measures to ensure that women had access to productive resources and improved access to labour markets, including regional and international markets. It was creating an enabling environment for the provision and use of information and communication technology, especially among marginalized groups, including women.

3. Her Government was committed to the Vienna Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It believed that there needed to be a conscious move to increase the number of women in key decision-making positions in the processes of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It had identified women's sexual and reproductive health as a critical area to address in the National Action Plan. Its national health policy promoted gender equity in relation to the distribution of health services and the planning and implementation of health programmes. It had taken a leadership role in preventing the spread, promoting treatment and mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS. As a result, the prevalence rate had dropped from 30 per cent in 1989 to the current rate of 6.5 per cent.

4. Other challenges included securing the provision of financial services beyond mere microcredit, to Ugandan women, particularly in rural areas, and improving access to markets for their produce. Resources had not reached sufficient levels to ensure adequate coverage of government programmes, interventions and delivery of services.

5. **Ms. Haile** (Eritrea) said that at the beginning of 2006, her Government had submitted its combined initial, second and third periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. That very useful exercise had brought out the advances made in Eritrea in promoting women's rights and the areas that needed to be strengthened. She was happy to announce that a majority of Eritrean women were coming out in support of laws prohibiting the practice of female genital mutilation. To that end, a well-coordinated and integrated intersectoral campaign was being conducted by the Government and the National Union of Eritrean Women.

6. Her Government was fully committed to the implementation of the Beijing objectives. For historical reasons and practical purposes, the task of gender mainstreaming in Eritrea was assumed by the National Union of Eritrean Women, which had the mandate and the capacity to act as an autonomous national coordinator for the cause of women. In 2005, it had prepared a five-year National Gender Action Plan that had been adopted by the Cabinet to serve as a guiding framework for all sectors.

7. The rights of women were recognized in Eritrea's first Constitution (1997). Thirty per cent of seats in the National Assembly were reserved for women and they had the right to participate freely in elections for the

remaining 70 per cent of seats. They had the right to occupy leadership positions, to vote and stand for election for any political seat in national, regional and village assemblies and to pursue on an equal basis with men all types of economic opportunities.

8. Eritrea's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper emphasized women's needs specifically. The Government had adopted measures to give women improved access to resources, opportunities and basic social services. It had taken steps to ensure that women enjoyed full access to quality health care and to the information necessary to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. It had also introduced a programme for the free distribution of essential vitamins, iodine and mosquito nets to women of childbearing age.

9. In education, the Government had drawn up a National Education Gender Policy and Strategy that ensured equal rights and opportunities for both sexes and aimed to narrow disparities at the primary and secondary levels. That policy was aligned with the Millennium Development Goals and was aimed at achieving universal primary education by 2015.

10. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon) said that the National Commission for Lebanese Women was the government body in charge of promoting gender equality and the advancement of women. It had set out four legal objectives in its strategy, namely, adherence to international instruments; implementation of legal texts guaranteeing women's rights; drafting of legislation to enforce women's rights and enshrining of women's human rights in all legislative texts. In that context, efforts were being focused on promoting awareness of international instruments, acceding to those to which Lebanon was not yet a party and removing Lebanon's reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. School textbooks referring to the Convention and to the International Human Rights Covenants were distributed to all schools. Lebanon also benefited from and contributed to the achievements of other Arab States through its membership in the Arab Women's Organization (AWO) and the Arab Women's Parliamentary Network.

11. His Government was convinced that linking women's development with social development was an important step that should be followed up with vigour and urgency. While the development of women's rights and gender equality could be viewed from many different standpoints, none was more important to her delegation than the issue highlighted by the Beijing Platform for Action in referring to the elimination of conflict and the attainment of peace as prerequisites for the advancement of women. Israeli aggression and the continuing occupation of Lebanese land remained the greatest obstacle to the country's growth in every field, but especially in development and gender equality. Lebanese women, however, had an indomitable spirit, as exemplified by two women who had shown strength and dignity in the face of terrorism. Despite having lost an arm and a leg in a bombing attack intended to silence her, May Chidiac, a popular television presenter, had returned to her job of reporting the news. Layal Nagib, a young photojournalist, had been killed in August 2006 by a targeted Israeli aerial bomb during her investigation of the Israeli aggression in Lebanon. Her delegation condemned the killing of civilians of any religion or nationality and hoped that women in the Middle East, whether in Lebanon, Palestine or Israel, would be able to live in peace so that they could achieve their fullest potential and thereby serve their societies.

12. **Mr. Khalfallah** (Tunisia), recalling that women's active participation and involvement was crucial to any country's development process and that women's rights and status must be strengthened, said that since independence, Tunisia had consistently promoted the advancement of women. With the adoption in 1956 of the Personal Status Code, Tunisian women had been freed from certain practices that violated their dignity as human beings. Education had been made free and universal and women currently accounted for 57 per cent of university students. Tunisian women were active participants in political and economic life and occupied senior positions both in Government and in the private sector. A law would soon be enacted giving women the option of working part-time while receiving two thirds of their salary and preserving all their social security and retirement entitlements.

13. In an effort to share its experience, the Government was cooperating with other countries in Africa and beyond, under a trilateral cooperation framework in which Tunisian experts shared their expertise in various fields, including family planning, which had enabled Tunisia to bring its population growth rate down to 1.1 per cent. In November 2005, the Government had hosted the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society. In that

regard, he drew attention to paragraph 90 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society and paragraphs 13 and 23 of the Tunis Commitment, calling for greater participation of women in the information society.

14. The situation of Palestinian women could not be overlooked. The persistent, systematic violation of their fundamental rights, particularly their right to life, was unacceptable and contrary to humanitarian and human rights instruments.

15. **Ms. Itoua-Apoyolo** (Congo) said that her Government had set up legal clinics for women victims of all types of violence, particularly sexual violence. Services for those women were provided in partnership with development agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and civil society organizations. The Government attached high priority to gender equality and women's empowerment and the 2002 Constitution guaranteed equality between the sexes. Information and training sessions had been held to prepare women for political participation, advocacy programmes had been organized to promote women's access to decision-making positions and gender focal points had been put in place in different ministries. Much remained to be done, however, to increase women's representation in decision-making bodies.

16. In partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), her Government had launched projects to reduce the school drop-out rate among girls and to narrow the gap between boys and girls in the study of science and technology. It had organized campaigns to raise awareness of the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other instruments to which the country was a party. To combat the feminization of poverty, the Government, with the support of development partners such as UNDP and the World Bank, was promoting women's access to women's savings and loan facilities. Training was also being provided to women's groups, including teenage mothers, in such areas as sewing, embroidery, processing of agricultural and food products, catering, market gardening and information and communication technology.

17. Her Government was particularly concerned about the extreme vulnerability of women and girls to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Accordingly, it had put in place a national plan to combat AIDS and had set up the National Council to Combat AIDS under the direct authority of the President of the Republic. Those two mechanisms took into account the specific needs of women, girls and mothers and children in the area of prevention and access to treatment.

18. Despite the progress made, her country still faced serious political, sociocultural and economic obstacles in its efforts to achieve gender equality. Her Government would redouble its efforts to achieve the Beijing objectives and the Millennium Development Goals, but it needed the assistance of bilateral and multilateral partners. The recent signing of an agreement with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to set up a country office in Brazzaville reflected its readiness to cooperate with such partners.

19. **Ms. Soud** (Oman) said that gender equality was a cornerstone of social justice and that His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said had called on women to participate fully in Oman's economic and social development. The Government had four women ministers and two women ambassadors and women constituted 12 per cent of the membership of the State and Shura Councils, 31 per cent of the civil service and 56 per cent of education workers. Numerous training activities for women were conducted by the Department of Women's and Children's Affairs, women's welfare needs were addressed by 39 women's associations and a women's volunteer work coordination committee coordinated relations between Oman and international organizations, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and its 3,000 volunteers in Oman. There were also 14 rural women's centres offering training in traditional skills and monthly social security assistance was available to women at risk of falling into poverty. The State's Basic Law guaranteed education to both genders and Sultan Qaboos University offered grants and travel opportunities to male and female students on an equal basis. Government health policies provided programmes for maternal care, birth spacing and HIV/AIDS. Recent years had seen an increase in the number of women in the labour market. The media also played an important role in raising public awareness of gender issues.

20. **Ms. Eilon Shahar** (Israel) recalled the international commitments to gender equality made at the 2005 World Summit, including the reaffirmation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and said that the full

implementation of those commitments, and women's empowerment in general, was necessary for the development of all States. In the context of globalization, the education and legal status afforded to women contributed to a country's competitive advantage. Moreover, defending women's rights and equality was a moral obligation enshrined in international conventions and United Nations resolutions.

21. She welcomed the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122 and Add.1), which showed the lack of real progress made in that area. States and individuals should not use their customs or traditions to justify violence against women and States must prevent the downward spiral whereby the inequalities generated by gender-based violence helped, in turn, to perpetuate that violence. Legislation must be drawn up, and strictly enforced, to end impunity for violence against women. Priority must be given to mainstreaming that issue into human rights law, policies and mindsets. To that end, she welcomed the study's focus on education. In Israel, children were taught about gender equality and leadership and empowerment programmes for girls were implemented.

22. Gender-based violence and discrimination constituted an assault on women's human rights. The concept of women's equality was enshrined in Israel's declaration of independence and the country had a long history of women leaders at the highest levels of government. Much remained to be achieved, however, including the full enforcement of existing legislation in such areas as equal pay for equal work. Improvements to legislation on the status of women had recently been embarked upon, including in the areas of violations of women's labour law and equal opportunities in the workplace. To help achieve Israel's goal of zero-tolerance for gender-based discrimination and violence, the parliamentary Committee on the Status of Women was responsible for proposing gender-related legislation, monitoring the implementation of existing laws and liaising with women's non-governmental organizations.

23. Israel participated wherever possible in international efforts to alleviate poverty and promote gender equality, for example, through its Golda Meir Mount Carmen International Training Centre, which aimed to promote the development and empowerment of women, particularly those of the South. The training given focused on community development, including civil society, microenterprise and early childhood education, and had already been dispensed to over 10,000 women. In 2005, the Centre had hosted an international conference on "Migration and Gender Issues within the Millennium Development Goals", attended by women leaders from around the world. In September 2006, the International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Israeli-Palestinian Peace, a group which included Palestinian and Israeli women leaders, had met in New York to help move peace negotiations forward. She hoped that that meeting, and subsequent ones, would ultimately contribute to achieving peaceful coexistence between the two sides. Israel was a progressive society and, as international concepts of equality and rights evolved, it was committed to remaining at the forefront of change.

24. **Ms. Sendid-Berrah** (Algeria) expressed concern that, despite States' many commitments and national, regional and international efforts over the years, the problem of violence against women continued to affect all countries, regardless of differences of identity, tradition, religion, culture and development. That situation was confirmed by the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women. Violence against women not only violated their human rights but also endangered their health and hindered the achievement of the goals of equality, development and social cohesion. Her Government was committed to combating all forms of violence against women through the introduction of new legislation, including the criminalization of sexual harassment, and the provision of psychological support. In addition, campaigns involving local and national government representatives and associations, schools and the media were being carried out to raise awareness of violence against women.

25. Her Government was deeply committed to the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and was bringing its legislation into line with their provisions and recommendations. Family law had been updated to include new provisions in such areas as equal rights and obligations of spouses, granting women full powers to conclude marriage contracts and accommodation arrangements for divorced mothers with custody of young children. Nationality law had also been amended to establish equality between women and men and allow Algerian citizenship to be

passed on through the mother and through marriage with an Algerian man or woman. The principle of gender equality was enshrined in Algeria's Constitution and was scrupulously respected in both civil and criminal law. In addition, the issues of gender equality and advancement of women were increasingly addressed by public policies and civil society actions. To consolidate those achievements, her Government, as a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, intended to step up measures for the protection of girls to enable them to achieve their full potential and grow up in an environment where they were respected and valued. It would also continue its efforts to ensure the full participation of Algerian women in all spheres of social, political and economic life.

26. **Mr. Huan** (Malaysia) said that in order to realize its full potential in pursuing sustainable development, a nation must harness all its human resources, including women. Women's progress had contributed significantly to the overall progress of his country. Creating an enabling environment and mainstreaming a gender perspective into the national agenda were necessary for establishing equal rights and opportunities for women and men. In that spirit, his Government was endeavouring to reform the relevant mechanisms and institutions to enable them to act to redress gender inequality and was drawing up enabling legislation and policies in that area. Malaysia's Constitution recognized and safeguarded women's rights and explicitly prohibited discrimination against women. Existing legislation was being reviewed, including in the area of Islamic family law, to eliminate any provisions that might have a negative impact on women. All future draft legislation would be analysed from that perspective.

27. The 1989 National Policy for Women and its Plan of Action were being reviewed to ensure equitable access by women and men to resources, information, opportunities and the benefits of development. Similarly, greater prominence had been given to promoting gender equality with the inclusion of a section on women and development in Malaysia's five-year development plans. With a separate ministry dedicated to women's issues, gender mainstreaming had been enhanced throughout the country. A committee on gender equality, chaired by the Prime Minister, had been set up, gender focal points had been established in all ministries and government agencies and ministerial working groups and technical working groups were addressing critical areas of concern. Networking and sharing of good practices among government agencies and experts on gender issues were being stepped up.

28. Women in Malaysia had access to, and were empowered by, education, health care and employment. Their high level of education had enabled many to gain high-level jobs and participate in formal decision-making processes. Notwithstanding those achievements, setbacks to achieving the goal of gender equality, such as gender stereotyping, persisted. To address that situation, guidelines had been drawn up to ensure that the content of school textbooks was not gender-biased, gender-disaggregated data and statistics were produced for all education levels and gender centres had been set up in universities to conduct courses and research on gender issues. Reproductive health components had been integrated into national health programmes and sex education had been introduced into schools to promote healthy relationships between boys and girls, prevent abuse and enhance awareness of self-worth, rights and responsibilities. The Government had also issued guidelines to combat sexual harassment in the workplace.

29. He welcomed the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women. In Malaysia, government agencies, in close cooperation with non-governmental agencies, had made significant progress in combating domestic violence and other crimes against women. One-stop crisis centres, bringing together police, medical and counselling services, had been set up in almost all Malaysian hospitals. The effectiveness of such initiatives was being monitored through a new information system based on gender-disaggregated data.

30. His Government believed firmly in the benefits of exchanging experience, practices and expertise and had been at the forefront of multilateral efforts in that area. In 2005, it had hosted the Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement on the Advancement of Women, the theme of which had been "Empowering Women in Facing the Challenges of Globalization". The Meeting had adopted the Malaysian delegation's proposal to set up an institute for the empowerment of women, serving the non-aligned countries, in Malaysia. Lastly, his Government appreciated the contribution of the non-governmental sector to efforts to promote the advancement of women and pledged its continued

cooperation to regional and international initiatives to achieve that goal.

31. **Ms. Romulus** (Haiti) welcomed the Secretary-General's report on measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/61/174). Active participation in national and international conferences by Haiti's Ministry of Women's Affairs and Women's Rights had ended the international isolation caused by the country's political and institutional crisis. The Ministry had implemented legal and practical measures to improve the status of Haitian women, giving them access to education, participation in public life, social, economic and legal safeguards and protection from all forms of discrimination, and thereby helping them to escape from poverty and violence. Considerable progress had been made in the area of legal reform aimed at combating the most blatant forms of gender discrimination. The Criminal Code had been amended to define rape as a crime against the person and abolish discrimination in the matter of adultery. Murder of a woman by her husband, and violence by a woman against her husband were no longer excusable in any circumstances. Other draft legislation submitted to the new Haitian Parliament for approval concerned cohabitation, responsible paternity and sexual abuse. In bringing its legislation into line with the international conventions signed and ratified by Haiti, the Government was demonstrating its genuine political commitment to restoring the rights of Haitian women.

32. The Ministry of Women's Affairs and Women's Rights had drawn up a five-year plan of action, in cooperation with civil society, government bodies and international agencies, for combating violence against women. The plan covered aspects such as data collection, victim support and awareness raising. The Ministry had also launched a programme to encourage women's entrepreneurship, particularly in the production sector, which included training to facilitate their access to non-traditional areas of employment. Other measures had been adopted to increase women's access to education at all levels — an urgent priority given their key role in the country's economy. Measures to combat gender discrimination included renaming certain streets and public spaces after women who had played an important role in the country's history or contributed to social progress. Her Government was committed to increasing the participation of women in all spheres of decision-making, but much remained to be done.

33. **Ms. Diallo** (Mali) said that her Government had reported recently to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the considerable progress made in Mali in the area of the advancement of women. In order to improve the situation of women, particularly the 78 per cent of women living in rural areas who played an important economic and social role, her Government had drawn up a Plan of Action in line with the commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women. The main objective of the Plan, which was in its second phase (2002-2006), was to improve the situation and status of women in Mali. The priority areas targeted were reducing female illiteracy, improving women's health, particularly their reproductive health, increasing gender equity and improving women's image in society.

34. Among the considerable achievements made, school enrolment of girls had increased by over 50 per cent and a number of women had been elected to senior public positions formerly reserved for men. Women were represented in local and national government and five of the country's 29 ministers were women. Positive discrimination and special measures for women had been introduced, including in the area of reproductive health. Awareness-raising and information campaigns on the subject of excision had been carried out, with the support of civil society. Measures to promote women's employment and combat poverty had been implemented, including legislation on equal pay for equal work, a programme to promote women's entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector and local credit schemes to support women in the informal sector. Rural women's literacy rates had increased and rural women benefited from positive discrimination in the allocation of plots of land. In the funding of political parties, incentives had been introduced to promote greater inclusion of women.

35. Much remained to be done, however, as there continued to be an ingrained bias against women in Malian society. The Government had introduced a number of strategies to remedy that problem, including awareness raising and education about discrimination and violence, awareness-raising among political opinion-makers and the promotion of positive change in traditional customs and beliefs.

36. **Mr. García** (El Salvador) said that gender equity and the empowerment of women were essential for achieving development, reducing poverty and raising living standards. The overall objective of his Government's policy for women was to ensure that women participated in national development on an equal footing with men and shared responsibility with them. In order to achieve that objective, inter-agency coordination between the Salvadoran Institute for Women's Development and the National Secretariat for the Family had been strengthened and strategic alliances have been established with the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

37. His Government attached great importance to efforts to address the problem of violence against women and girls. It was a party to the major international and regional agreements in that field, which, coupled with national actions, formed a coherent legal framework for combating and eradicating all forms of violence against women. The National Plan to Prevent and Address Domestic Violence was aimed at coordinating institutional efforts to implement, follow up and evaluate programmes, projects and activities for the prevention, punishment and elimination of violence against women and girls. Programmes to combat violence against women and girls by youth gangs were also being implemented in cooperation with other countries in Central and North America, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

38. Progress had been made over the past decade in education for women and girls, with a steady increase in the rate of school enrolment for girls. In the health area, the Government had changed its focus in recent years to comprehensive care for women in all areas of their lives, including sexual and reproductive health. It had also ratified ILO Conventions No. 100 on equal pay for work of equal value and No. 111 on discrimination in employment and occupation.

39. His delegation looked forward to the report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence, which would no doubt address the issue of restructuring the gender-related mechanisms within the United Nations Secretariat. It reaffirmed its support for the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), which had made significant progress on the issues of women and migration; women, peace and security; and gender, governance and political participation. It also acknowledged the significant contributions of UNIFEM to the study of violence against women and girls and its support for national efforts to combat HIV/AIDS. The promotion and protection of women's human rights was essential to the transformation of Salvadoran society and the consolidation of a culture of peace that would lead to progress in the twenty-first century.

40. **Ms. Mwaffisi** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the recommendation in the Secretary-General's study on violence against women concerning the availability of adequate data and information needed to be followed, as it was key to any meaningful policy framework and other interventions to address violence. Her Government had taken several measures to address violence against women. Domestic violence had been criminalized and the Sexual Harassment Act of 1998 protected the dignity and integrity of women and children. The Government also subscribed to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Gender and Development Declaration. Its 2005 revised national plan of action for combating violence against women provided for legal, social, economic and cultural strategies and actions at various levels. Awareness-raising, advocacy and training of both men and women on the relevant laws had brought about positive changes. Women were claiming their rights in court and stiff sentences were being imposed on culprits.

41. Her Government had drawn up a National Strategy for Gender Development and, in order to meet its objectives, had institutionalized gender focal points in ministries, government departments and regional and local authorities who were responsible for mainstreaming gender in their respective sectors while linking up with the national gender machinery. It had also integrated a gender perspective in its National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty, in all clusters addressing reduction of income poverty, quality of life and social well-being, governance and accountability. Strategy interventions included entrepreneurship training for rural women and youth, review of laws, advocacy against cultural practices that denied women and young people access to resources and actions to protect women from violence while dispensing justice to perpetrators.

42. Thanks to affirmative action, Tanzania had reached the 30-per-cent target of the Beijing Platform for Action and SADC for women's participation in

politics and was consolidating its efforts towards achieving the goal of gender parity by 2015. It had achieved the Millennium Development Goal of gender parity in primary education and was turning its efforts to secondary and tertiary education. However, the impact of HIV/AIDS had frustrated efforts for the advancement of women, for instance, when a girl had to drop out of school to care for sick or orphaned brothers and sisters. Interventions in that area should target women and especially girls.

43. Tanzania's national policy and legislative frameworks for the advancement of women were well developed, but the challenge was to translate those frameworks into practical action. Technical and financial resources were limited and she called for more cooperation and support at the international level.

44. **Ms. Kamal** (Bahrain) said that under His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa, Bahrain had made great strides in increasing women's participation in national decision-making and development. Her Majesty Shaikha Sabika Bint Ibrahim Al-Khalifa had hosted the second meeting of the Supreme Council of the Arab Women's Organization (AWO) in Bahrain in 2005 and an AWO conference was scheduled to be held in Bahrain in November 2006 to review progress made since the first Arab Women's Summit in 2000. Bahraini women had risen to high positions, notably Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, President of the current session of the General Assembly. In the year since Bahrain's Supreme Council for Women had developed a national strategy for the advancement of Bahraini women, many steps had been taken to increase the role of women in society and political life, including a programme to prepare women for participation in the upcoming elections on 25 November 2006. Those measures stemmed not only from the implementation of international agreements and resolutions, but also from the value placed on the role of women in society by Arab and Islamic civilization.

45. **Ms. Sharma** (Nepal) said that her Government was ushering in a new era of multiparty democracy, the rule of law and human rights and had taken measures to ensure 33-per-cent participation of women in all political bodies and in the civil service, allowing them to take part in decision-making processes at all levels. It attached great importance to the work of the United Nations in the field of the advancement of women and believed that the outcome documents of the Beijing Conference and the twenty-third special session would play an important role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

46. More than half the population of Nepal were women and girls and poverty, illiteracy, lack of access to economic resources, poor maternal health, trafficking of women and girls for commercial and sexual exploitation, gender discrimination and domestic violence were some of the challenges facing them. Lack of education and awareness of their rights and sociocultural superstition and traditions compounded their problems, especially in rural areas. The Government was fully committed to women's development through legislative and administrative measures and development policies and programmes. Targeted programmes had also been undertaken for disadvantaged and marginalized groups and rural women. The Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, headed by a woman, had made efforts to mainstream gender into the development programmes of all sectoral agencies. Nepal was a party to several international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and had submitted its periodic reports to the respective treaty-monitoring bodies. The United Nations system should increase its technical assistance to States for the implementation of those instruments. Empowering women economically and politically should be a collective commitment of the international community, which should support developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, to that end.

47. **Mr. Wigwe** (Nigeria) said that his Government's commitment to combating discrimination against women had been demonstrated through a number of policy initiatives and programmes at all levels of government. Concerted efforts had been made to outlaw customary or traditional practices that were discriminatory and harmful to the physical and mental health of women and girls, such as child marriage and betrothal, trafficking in persons, discriminatory and dehumanizing widowhood rites, female genital mutilation and street hawking by school-aged children, especially girls.

48. His Government took seriously its commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as manifested not only in its national policies drawn from the provisions of the Convention but also in its compliance with its reporting obligations. The process of incorporating the

provisions of the Convention into domestic law was at an advanced stage, following completion of the first reading of the relevant bill in the National Assembly. Its passage would increase the number of women in elective office by up to 30 per cent and open up new vistas of opportunity for women. The Government was grateful to UNIFEM for its ongoing awareness-raising programme in the country in preparation for the 2007 general elections. That grass-roots effort had sensitized women to their political rights and responsibilities and provided them with an avenue to contribute to the political debate and thus increase their participation. The Government's new national gender policy, to be launched by the end of 2006, would provide for equal representation of women and address women's human rights and the mainstreaming of gender issues in all sectoral policies and programmes.

49. Concerned at the vulnerability of women in conflict situations, his Government was restructuring the security sector to include a national peace policy aimed at addressing gender-based violence in crisis situations. In the area of health-care delivery, women's special needs received particular attention. For instance, a nationwide survey on vesico vaginal fistula (VVF) had prompted the rehabilitation of VVF treatment centres and a nationwide advocacy campaign on safe motherhood.

50. In an attempt to mainstream gender into national programmes and activities, the Government had made it mandatory for ministries to give due consideration to gender issues in their annual budgets. A pilot programme on gender-responsive budgeting had provided training for budget officers. In the area of poverty alleviation, the Government had established two schemes offering credit to women, the Women's Fund for Economic Empowerment and the Business Development Fund for Women, which had benefited women's cooperatives and women agricultural workers.

51. Some of the obstacles to the advancement of women in Nigeria could be surmounted through political will and cultural reorientation, but that would require concerted effort by the international community, through development assistance, capacity-building and training to overcome the myriad problems facing women not only in Nigeria but all over the world.

52. **Mr. Belinga-Eboutou** (Cameroon) said that, despite a host of international instruments and actions for the promotion of women's rights, violence against women persisted in every country of the world. Eliminating such violence was a universal task that required two elements, education and poverty eradication. Education empowered women and made them aware of their rights and responsibilities in society, allowing them to overcome the many obstacles they faced and to help create an environment conducive to the fulfilment of both men's and women's potential. Poverty eradication was important because women could not make progress in a society that lacked hospitals or roads and in which they had no access to markets, schools or microcredit. The development and adoption of international rules, action programmes or other instruments would be worthless unless they were built on education and poverty alleviation measures. He commended the Commission on the Status of Women for its many contributions to the advancement of women's rights and the elimination of gender-based discrimination.

53. **Mr. Rangel** (Angola) said that full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly was essential for achieving world development goals. World leaders had agreed to promote gender equality and eliminate gender discrimination through a range of measures. Improving women's education, reproductive health and economic opportunities was of great strategic value and a key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. His Government allocated 28.5 per cent of its budget to measures designed to guarantee women's access to senior positions, such as literacy campaigns, building of schools, expansion of family planning services, improvement of women's access to microcredit and implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. Considerable progress had been made in reducing violence against women, thanks to human rights education campaigns conducted with the police, the armed forces and the general population. The Government had also activated a process of revision of the Criminal Code and the Code of Civil Procedure that would integrate and harmonize traditional common law with the legal system in order to eliminate discrimination. All available resources would be utilized to enhance women's participation in society and eliminate all forms of violence against women and children.

54. **Ms. Chenoweth** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was currently the mechanism most instrumental in removing obstacles to women's basic human rights, particularly its article 14, which addressed the problems faced by rural women. FAO recognized not only the crucial role played by women, but also the need to promote their advancement and mainstream gender issues into development policies and strategies. Rural areas required urgent and decisive attention because 75 per cent of the world's poor lived in such areas and depended on agriculture and related rural crafts, trade and services for their livelihoods. Rural women played an important role in securing the future of agricultural systems and food and livelihood security. The goal of creating an enabling social environment for the advancement of women and for rural and agricultural development required the close cooperation of many actors at all levels. FAO was fully committed to establishing partnerships for more effective action in promoting the advancement of women and gender equality as a means of fighting hunger and poverty.

55. **Ms. Filip** (Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)) said that gender inequality and discrimination in society at large could be addressed only by working collectively through and with parliaments and their members. A decade after the Beijing Conference, it was unfortunate, indeed unbelievable, that women around the world still faced such obstacles as discrimination, lack of access to medical care and illiteracy. It was also regrettable that most parliaments remained male-dominated. Around the world, violence against women was a fundamental violation of their rights that took many forms, including trafficking, sexual and domestic violence and female genital mutilation, and it was most acute in conflict and post-conflict areas.

56. Violence against women hindered human development and contradicted democratic principles and must therefore be addressed by humankind as a whole. The recent IPU Assembly had passed a resolution focusing on how parliaments could and must promote effective ways of combating violence against women in all fields. The resolution outlined specific measures for prevention, assistance and criminalization, including reviewing legislation that hindered gender equality, ratifying international and regional instruments, establishing observatories on violence against women and allocating fiscal resources to ensure the implementation of legislation and measures to combat violence against women. Cooperation was important for meeting the goal of ending violence in general and violence against women and children in particular. IPU had a strong partnership with the United Nations and had worked closely with its Division for the Advancement of Women in organizing annual seminars and sessions on violence against women. It would continue to focus on female genital mutilation and would make it a priority to assist parliaments in developing legislation in that field.

57. **Mr. Ndjonkou** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that in the area of violence against women, ILO undertook policy development, research and operational and awareness-raising activities on workplace violence, including sexual harassment at work, forced labour and trafficking and child labour. On sexual harassment, a form of violence that affected mainly women, efforts had been made to sensitize governments and workers' and employers' organizations and examples of good practices had been collected from local and national governments, enterprises and trade unions that had successfully implemented zero-tolerance policies and violence-prevention training programmes. Inequality in pay and remuneration was perhaps the most persistent form of discrimination between men and women and full implementation of ILO Convention No. 100 establishing the principle of equal pay for work of equal value would help reduce violence against women caused by economic inequality.

58. ILO was concerned about the labour dimensions of human trafficking, which it viewed as contrary to full, productive and freely chosen employment. To achieve its goal of protecting migrant workers, ILO focused on improving the knowledge base on working conditions, recruitment and employment practices for such workers. It had also implemented some 30 anti-trafficking projects and was developing a body of research to inform new programmes and projects targeting forced labour and a comprehensive information guide on "Preventing Discrimination, Exploitation and Abuse of Women Migrant Workers".

59. With regard to the status of women in the United Nations system, ILO had succeeded in raising the proportion of women at the senior management level from 32 per cent in 1995 to 39 per cent in 2005. Action was also being taken to identify obstacles to staff

members' achievement of a work/life balance and to create a family-friendly working environment at ILO.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/61/SR.13

General Assembly
Sixty-first session

Official Records

Distr.: General
26 October 2006

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 13th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 11 October 2006, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Al-Bayati ..... (Iraq)

Contents

Agenda item 67: Promotion and protection of the rights of children

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children

(b) Follow-up to the special session on children

Launch of the Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against children

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

06-56343 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 67: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/61/303)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/61/41 and Corr.1 and Add.1, 207, 275 and Corr.1 and 299)

(b) Follow-up to the special session on children (A/61/270)

Launch of the Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against children

1. **The Chairman** said that, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 56/138, an in-depth study of violence against children within the family, schools, alternative-care institutions and detention facilities, the workplace and communities had been carried out under the leadership of Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, the Independent Expert appointed by the Secretary-General. The recommendations in the study (A/61/299) were welcome. States were urged to prohibit all forms of violence against children and address its root causes. Children were the most vulnerable members of society; no violence against children was justified.

2. **Ms. Al Khalifa** (President of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly) said that work on the study had been inclusive, involving all regions and stakeholders, including representatives of Governments, the United Nations, regional bodies, parliamentarians, civil society and children themselves. Violence affected children everywhere, regardless of race, class or culture. Some children were particularly vulnerable owing to age, sex or characteristics such as disability or social status. There was an urgent need for an international partnership to identify and address the root causes and establish mechanisms to prevent violence against children.

3. **Mr. Lopes** (Assistant Secretary-General and Director for Political Affairs, Executive Office of the Secretary-General), speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General, said that the study on violence against children had been led by an independent expert appointed by the Secretary-General, with support from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). He welcomed the Acting Director-General of WHO, Dr. Nordström, the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Veneman and the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Khan Williams.

4. The study showed that violence against children knew no boundaries and was invisible, unpunished and sometimes even condoned or endorsed by social norms and national law. That had to stop. No forms of violence could be justified or accepted. The study provided a picture of the impact of violence on children and proposed recommendations for preventing and responding to it. It described various types of violence experienced in the family, schools, care and justice institutions, the workplace and communities. It had been a great challenge for the study to break down the walls of silence that frequently surrounded violence. Very little was known about how to detect and report cases of violence. The idea that parents, teachers and caregivers had unlimited rights in the upbringing of children weakened approaches to curb and prevent abuses within homes, schools and State institutions.

5. The study concluded that violence against children was not inevitable and that it could and must be prevented. States must invest in evidence-based policies and programmes to address factors which gave rise to violence against children.

6. The General Assembly would give thorough consideration to the study and its recommendations, which highlighted the urgency of acting at the national and international levels to protect the right of children to be safe from all forms of violence. The international community, Governments and civil society shared the responsibility of implementing and following the recommendations in the report. Children expected no less. It was a pleasure to welcome on behalf of the Secretary-General the work done by Mr. Pinheiro.

7. **Mr. Pinheiro** (Independent Expert for the United Nations study on violence against children) said that the Secretary-General had appointed him to lead the study, and that he had received significant support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNICEF and WHO. He would now present the key findings and recommendations of the study (A/61/299), which were the result of a participatory process.

8. Violence against children was a broad and pervasive problem. In 2002, 53,000 children had died

as a result of homicide. During the same year, 150 million girls and 73 million boys under 18 had experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence. Much violence against children was implicitly condoned by society or legally sanctioned and remained hidden or unrecorded.

9. The vulnerability of children to violence was linked to their age. Young children were at greatest risk of physical violence, while sexual violence predominantly affected adolescents. Boys were at greater risk of physical violence, while girls were at greater risk of sexual violence, neglect and forced prostitution. Violence against children was directly linked to discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes and was exacerbated by such factors as poverty, political instability and conflict.

10. The central message of the study was that no violence against children could be justified and that all violence against children could and must be prevented. Too often, efforts to address violence against children were reactive and fragmented.

11. Prevention must be a priority, with significant attention paid to underlying causes and risk factors. Attitudes that condoned or normalized violence against children must be changed, with particular attention paid to the gender aspect. Sensitive and high-quality legal, health and social services would be required in order to achieve that goal, and States should implement systematic national data collection on violence against children.

12. Preventing and responding to violence against children required the end of the authoritarian relationship between adults and children and the end to justifications of all assaults against children, not only those considered extreme. Tradition and discipline were not reasons to commit violent acts against children.

13. **Dr. Nordström** (Acting Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO)) said that maltreatment of children led to dangerous long-term conditions such as depression, suicidal behaviour and increased rates of cardiovascular disease, cancer and sexually-transmissible diseases. Child victims of violence often continued the cycle of violence after becoming adults. But the cycle could be stopped. Since violence against children followed certain predictable patterns, it could be prevented.

14. Dozens of countries had recently launched violence prevention programmes and were engaging in capacity-building to prevent violence. WHO would soon issue a report enabling countries to implement the recommendations in the study. Health workers were being trained to respond to maltreatment of children, to measure its extent and consequences and to prevent it by working with parents and caregivers.

15. Given the strong relationship between poverty and violence, the significance of the Millennium Development Goals could not be overestimated.

16. The study was unique in integrating public-health tools and human rights. WHO fully supported the suggestions included therein.

17. **Ms. Veneman** (Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that violence against children was often committed by those close to them, such as family members, teachers, spouses and schoolmates. Bullies often caused girls to stay away from school. Sexual violence spread HIV/AIDS, with girls far more vulnerable than boys. Some 82 million under-age wives were at risk of abuse from adult husbands. Over 100 million girls had undergone female genital cutting. Young female domestic workers were very often the object of violence in the homes where they worked. Child prostitution and pornography constituted another form of violence against children. Children in institutional care were particularly vulnerable to violence from other children and from adults who were supposed to care for them.

18. In many parts of the world there were no systems for reporting or investigating violence against children, and where official systems existed, they often dramatically underestimated the nature of the problem.

19. In South Africa, there were now innovative one-stop centres to aid victims of sexual violence. In Senegal, more than 1,600 villages had committed to ending female genital cutting and early marriage. In Nepal, over 200 paralegal centres worked to prevent violence against children and women. It was important to have child-accessible reporting systems and legal systems which functioned well.

20. **Ms. Khan Williams** (United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that the role of non-governmental organizations in the study had been critical. NGOs had ensured full participation of children in the study. Children had spoken with

clarity and courage about their experiences of violence, and their statements grounded the study in reality. They expected adults to take remedial action.

21. The devastating impact of violence on children made it imperative to change the way in which it was addressed. No country and no society were immune. Of course, there were clear risk factors, just as there were some protective factors. More research was needed, country by country, but the essential facts, gathered meticulously through a participatory process, were now known. The study also showed that such violence was completely unjustifiable and all of it preventable.

22. Prevention was critical and could be achieved through national legislation and its implementation and through international cooperation. Every child had a right to a life free from violence. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights supported the recommendations contained in the study and advocated structured, well-defined and focused follow-up. Children should never receive less protection than adults. Denial of children's fundamental rights often went hand in hand with denial of their dignity and of respect for them. The study highlighted the equality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights and the importance of comprehensive approaches to the problem.

23. **Ms. Mayo Puala** (Youth participant), speaking on behalf of the world's youth, recounted stories of children from different parts of the world who had suffered from poverty, child labour, sexual abuse, armed conflict and harassment. It was the responsibility of the international community to act on behalf of children and to speak for those who had no voice. The time had come to desist from trivializing and denying violence, which existed in the home, school, workplace and streets. The same was true of sexual violence: indifference to incest, paedophilia and prostitution had assumed disturbing proportions. Children were also conscripted into armed forces in violation of their rights and of the international conventions ratified by their countries. Certain categories of children, already vulnerable, were made increasingly so through discrimination and exclusion.

24. Traditional and religious practices, such as female genital mutilation, dowry, child marriage and bonded labour, were among the worst and most common violations of children's rights. Given the amplitude and dramatic consequences of such violence, children no longer tolerated the excuses made by the perpetrators. Everyone had a duty to society and to make the world a better place in which to live. The Convention on the Rights of the Child endowed young people with the right of participation, but such participation was largely discouraged.

25. Governments had a responsibility to stop and prevent all violence against children and to incorporate recommendations to that effect into their national plans, to reform legislation and to ensure children's participation in decision-making at all levels. They must endeavour to re-educate society and create a vast and accessible network of child protection for all children. United Nations agencies and NGOs, families and communities, the police, the media, the private sector and children and young people themselves must also assume responsibility for preventing violence against children.

26. Noting that a world without violence would eradicate many global problems, she said that the study was just the beginning of a complex worldwide process of eliminating practices harmful to children. In conclusion, she urged those present to recall their own childhood, to consider what they wished for their own children and to seek to create a brighter future for all children because to hurt children was to hurt the world.

27. **The Chairman** opened the floor for questions.

28. **Crown Prince Haakon** (Norway) said that the level and extent of violence against the world's children compelled the international community to take urgent action against that silent emergency. It was his honour to serve as a bridge between the international launch of the study and the launch taking place in Norway that same day.

29. Speaking from his experience as Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, he said he had met many children at risk of violence around the globe and was convinced that countries could prosper only if the voices of children were heard. Combined efforts were urgently needed to create a safer and more just world, addressing the root causes of the phenomenon and following best practices as recommended in the study, because violence against children was also undermining efforts to achieve the Goals.

30. The proposed establishment and strengthening of comprehensive national child-protection systems would be instrumental in responding to violence against children. A significant change in attitudes was crucial to affording all children a life free from violence, a requirement of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. To that end, everyone must assume the role of caregiver and take immediate action to make homes, schools, communities and institutions safer for children. The study was unique in its enlistment of children, who now counted on effective follow-up; they must not be let down. He called for the strongest possible support for the principles and recommendations spelled out in the study and for effective action at the national, regional and global levels to create a world fit for children in the coming generation. In conclusion, he asked what concrete action Governments could take to remedy the failure to listen to children.

31. **Ms. Faye** (Senegal) pointed out that it was in the developing countries, especially in Africa, that children most suffered from poverty and the consequences of armed conflict. Violence hampered the development and full flowering of the child. Her country had enacted laws to combat that scourge and had created mechanisms and programmes for establishing children's rights and creating a safe environment for them. Her delegation endorsed the recommendations contained in the study and hoped that they would be effectively implemented. Since violence against children was rife throughout the world, she would like to know what other ways the international community could find in order to put an end to that cruel situation.

32. **Ms. Lintonen** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the study had adopted an integrated approach to violence against children. She asked the Independent Expert to suggest ways of changing the social acceptance of such violence, which led to a great deal of the violence in the world today. Regarding the recommendations concerned with dialogue between States and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, she wondered whether it would be useful to combine best practices on an international database for use in elaboration of national policies. She also sought further information on ways in which States could take the gender perspective into account in national policies on violence against children.

33. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon) said that the study could hardly be described as "in-depth" when it had failed to address the issue of child murder. The threat to children's lives was manifest in armed conflict and foreign occupation, a topic that had been totally ignored in the report. Even in paragraph 9, which contained a list of settings in which violence against children had been addressed, no reference had been made to the many Lebanese and Palestinian children who were refugees or internally displaced persons. Ms. Mayo Puala had said that children no longer accepted the excuses of the perpetrators of violence against children. It was time for adults to say the same.

34. **Mr. Ballestero** (Costa Rica) said there was no doubt that today's society was a sick society, in which the weakest and most vulnerable sectors in rich and poor countries alike were victims of violence. The problem was endemic. The diagnosis had been made and now the remedy must be found. The study exemplified what could be done in the multilateral arena, in which the United Nations had progressed from an organization that had originally focused on States to one that now focused on individuals. He asked the Independent Expert to ensure that the same change would occur regarding interaction with civil society and with the children of the present and future generations.

35. **Ms. Rashed** (Observer for Palestine) said that, despite the Independent Expert's reason why the study had not addressed the issue of children in armed conflict, the matter should have received some mention, reflecting, as it did, a situation in which children found no safe haven either in their homes or in their schools. The year 2006 had been the bloodiest year so far for Palestinian children because of the actions of the occupying Power. Most of the children in the Gaza Strip were refugees, and Palestinian children were subject to violence on a daily basis, in the form of detention, forced interrogation, beatings and even torture. It was axiomatic that the well-being of children fell within the mandate of those whose job it was to protect them. She requested the Independent Expert to clarify further the reasons for the omission, especially in a year that could not be considered as having provided a world fit for children.

36. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) said he welcomed the fact that the consultations that had resulted in the study had been comprehensive and had taken regional social and development issues into account. However, one dimension missing from the study was that of moral values. All religions and traditions had expressed

aversion to violence against children, and yet no legal framework relating to moral values had been included in the study.

37. His delegation welcomed the statement by Ms. Mayo Puala, given the fact that children's participation had hitherto been rather weak. In that regard, the Sudan held an annual event at which children expressed their views on issues and concerns. Follow-up to the study should not be hesitant in dealing with children living under foreign occupation in, for instance, Palestine and the Golan Heights. Since the study was the first of its kind, it should have been bolder and more thorough.

38. **Ms. Maierá** (Brazil) said that Governments should play an educating role, because no type of violence against children was justifiable, although it was ingrained in many countries as a form of discipline. Indeed, Brazil had now made it illegal to mete out corporal punishment in the home. She asked how far awareness of non-violent forms of punishment could go to prohibiting violence in all settings.

39. **Mr. Pinheiro** (Independent Expert for the United Nations study on violence against children) said that it was important to involve children in any efforts to combat violence against them, particularly in the formulation of national legislation. Law, however, was not sufficient to change realities. Rather, it was a good framework for action. As policies to promote the rights of children were often scattered across several ministries, there was a need for national Governments to integrate services and monitor implementation of relevant programmes and legislation. There was also a need to establish mechanisms to report violence and improve data collection.

40. States must participate more actively in efforts to make violence against children socially unacceptable. They needed to do more, in conjunction with civil society, to change mindsets and dispel stereotypes about the role of boys and girls and men and women through awareness campaigns. Without Government intervention, it would be very difficult to bring about such change. Regarding the implementation of national strategies, he welcomed the establishment of ombudsmen. He also commended the establishment of child helplines such as the one he had recently visited in Cairo.

41. Concerning the questions raised about the protection of children in armed conflict, the study had not tackled that issue as the Security Council had a specific mandate to address it. However, he had recently met with government officials in the Gaza Strip. His forthcoming book to accompany the study would reflect what he had witnessed and treat the situation in Palestine in detail. Page limits had restricted his ability to do so in the study.

42. **Dr. Nordström** (Acting Director-General of the World Health Organization) said that several steps could be taken immediately to translate the study into practice. The first such measure was to train health workers and teachers to be able to recognize, prevent and respond to cases of maltreatment and violence against children. The causes of such violence, including alcohol abuse, social inequality and violence in the media, could also be addressed in the longer term. Another step was to continue monitoring to bring the facts to light. Best practices could be shared. He drew attention to the WHO publication *Preventing Child Maltreatment: A Guide to Taking Action and Generating Evidence*. Progress had been made towards eliminating polio in the world; the same could be done with respect to violence against children. The best way to do so was to talk about the problem and to listen to children. Efforts to eliminate violence must include men and women and boys and girls alike.

43. **Ms. Andreychuk** (Canada) said that Canada valued the intersectoral work demonstrated by the collaboration of OHCHR, WHO and UNICEF and their role in the development of the study. Prevention of violence against children was most effective when sectors collaborated. The participation of young people in the development of the study was also important. Her delegation commended the statement made by the youth participant, which enabled the Committee to learn first hand about the experiences of young people. Violence against girls, boys and adolescents contravened their most basic human rights and affected their health, well-being and social development. Her Government would be working with Member States and the United Nations to ensure that the study's recommendations were put into practice.

44. **Mr. Cheok** (Singapore) said that the study was timely and comprehensive, and his delegation agreed with many of its observations. His Government had devoted significant resources to the health, safety and education of Singaporean children. Its strong record on the protection of the rights of children spoke for itself. Concerning the issue of violence, his Government had

adopted policies and a systematic framework to protect children from abuse and neglect. In addition, Singapore had participated in the consultative process for the study and had responded with detailed information to the various questionnaires.

45. While it supported efforts to protect the well-being of children, his delegation regretted that the Independent Expert had seen fit to equate the use of corporal punishment in schools with violence against children. It simply did not agree with that position. The regulated use of corporal punishment was an acceptable mode of discipline; it deterred acts of serious misbehaviour, registered the consequences of certain actions and encouraged respect for the rights of other children. The study had cited bullying, gangsterism and drug abuse among the kinds of violence which occurred among children in schools. As environments conducive to learning should be maintained in schools, it was necessary to deter such behaviour.

46. His Government's position should not be misrepresented as supporting the widespread and capricious use of corporal punishment. In Singapore, corporal punishment was meted out under clearly defined guidelines and procedures and used only as a last resort, when other measures had failed. It was considered as an option only when very serious misconduct had occurred. Such safeguards ensured that it was not abused; misuse of corporal punishment in Singapore was not tolerated.

47. **Mr. Cumberbatch Miguén** (Cuba) said that the report was important in that it codified, organized and processed information on violence against children. Some forms of violence against children did not receive as much attention as others. The abandonment of children, for example, might be the result of poverty, intolerance or simply despair over the lack of access to health care, education and employment. Cuts in social services were often made on the pretext that the market would resolve problems, regardless of the wishes of society. Despite their stated concern for the welfare of children, Governments often required developing countries to continue to service external debt even though, shamefully, several times the amount of the principal had already been paid. Developing countries were also often subjected to unilateral coercive measures which had a serious impact on the well-being of children.

48. Furthermore, more than $1 billion was spent yearly on weapons of all kinds. That money served to foment violence and social conflict rather than promote human rights and human development. His delegation would be grateful for further explanation of the social and economic conditions which had a direct bearing on the well-being of children and violence against them.

49. **Mr. Kanu** (Sierra Leone), commending the study, said that it was not enough for Governments to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child; they must also incorporate its provisions in their domestic legislation. He would therefore like to know about the kinds of assistance available from UNICEF to help countries which had not yet done so.

50. **Ms. Khattab** (Egypt), underlining her delegation's full support for the study, said that it was only a starting point for addressing the issue of violence against children directly. Follow-up was critical: rather than being carried out at five-year intervals when States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child submitted their reports, follow-up should be on an annual basis and when crises arose. The appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children was urgent and could not await the completion of the valuable ongoing efforts to reform the United Nations human-rights-treaty bodies.

51. While the Independent Expert's mandate did not cover children affected by armed conflict, she agreed with others that the rights of children to life had been grossly violated during the recent events in Lebanon and previously in Palestine. Children had been deliberately targeted. The number of children killed during those events was much higher than the number of combatants killed. There had been serious violations of international humanitarian law. She wondered how the international community could be more effective in ensuring the protection of the rights of children in such crisis situations and how the relevant agencies and mechanisms might better coordinate their efforts. Her delegation proposed holding a conference on the protection of the rights of children affected by armed conflict.

52. Lastly, she noted that in regional consultations in the Middle East and North Africa, children's participation had been very effective. She encouraged their continued involvement in future studies.

53. **Ms. Banks** (New Zealand), commending the study and the admirable process that led to it, said that most violence against children was perpetrated by those closest to them — their parents and caregivers at home. She would therefore welcome any advice on how to manage the complex interface between the family unit and wider society. It would be useful to know whether that question had in fact been raised by children and young people in the course of the Independent Expert's consultations. Her delegation would like further details on the range of options, including the appointment of the special representative, that could ensure satisfactory follow-up.

54. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic), noting the responses to the questions raised by the Palestinian and Lebanese delegations concerning children in armed conflict and children suffering from inhuman treatment under foreign occupation, said that her Government's position was well known and she did not wish to repeat what had already been stated. Given that the study was meant to be the first comprehensive United Nations study on all forms of violence against children, she failed to understand how it could neglect the situation of children under foreign occupation and the plight of Palestinian and Lebanese children. Her delegation hoped that that shortcoming would be rectified in future reports on violence against children.

55. **Ms. Otani** (Japan), noting with appreciation all those who had participated in the study, especially the children involved, said that, as the study on violence against children had a gender dimension, it should be considered in conjunction with the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122/Add.1). She would appreciate hearing the views of the Independent Expert on the possibility of coordinating the outcomes of the two studies to promote the implementation of their recommendations.

56. **Ms. Assoumou** (Côte d'Ivoire), speaking as a mother and deploring the increasingly sophisticated means used by adults to satisfy their financial and sexual appetites through the use of children, said that it was the responsibility of adults to put an end to violence and discrimination against children. She would like further information on the specific and practical steps which Governments must take to implement the recommendations put forward in the study.

57. **Mr. Al-Muqhim** (Saudi Arabia) said that all States should implement the recommendations in the study. He would like to know what steps might be taken by civil society to train newly married couples to be good parents. Further information was also needed on the violation of the rights of the child when parents favoured one of their children over others and on the possibility that such a preference could give rise to violence against them.

58. **Mr. Srivoranart** (Thailand) said that the study constituted a landmark in terms of its broad-based, child-centred approach and comprehensive coverage of all major challenges at all levels. His delegation pledged its continued support to ensure that the study would lead to significant changes on the ground in the best interests of children. Given the importance of bringing about such changes, he would like to know what steps should be or had already been taken to strengthen the capacity of the existing network of actors at the national level to follow up the study.

59. **Mr. Horn** (United States of America) said that combating the abuse and neglect of children was not enough; what was needed was to create positive and nurturing environments for children and provide the conditions conducive to their protection. In that regard, he welcomed the emphasis in the study on the role of the family in promoting the well-being of children. That attention to the family resonated in the United States and other countries which were implementing policies to support families, with initiatives to help couples form and sustain healthy marriages and encourage responsible and loving fatherhood.

60. He recommended that follow-up efforts should concentrate on the most egregious forms of violence and abuse against children so as to make the most use of the limited resources available to help children who were most at risk. He hoped that the study would provoke concerted action for the benefit of all children.

61. He asked whether the Independent Expert could outline the most appropriate means to assess the progress being made.

62. **Ms. Wamalwa** (Kenya) said she would like to know from the Independent Expert and from the Executive Director of UNICEF whether they could suggest alternative ways to discipline children that were acceptable to different cultures and communities, noting that firm discipline was sometimes needed to keep children in line. She referred to the rites of

passage that had been introduced in Kenya as alternatives to the practice of female genital mutilation.

63. **Mr. Pinheiro** (Independent Expert for the United Nations study on violence against children), replying to the questions and comments, said that an interfaith thematic seminar had been held which supported the recommendations of the in-depth study.

64. On the issue of corporal punishment, he pointed out that the study incorporated input from the Committee on the Rights of the Child and was based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. There were limitations to how that issue could be addressed. He referred the Committee to general comment No. 8 (2006) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which emphasized that addressing the acceptance or tolerance of corporal punishment of children and eliminating it was not only an obligation of States parties under the Convention but also a key strategy for reducing and preventing all forms of violence in societies. More dialogue was needed to assess the consequences of the physical punishment of children.

65. He agreed that socio-economic conditions and poverty affected the well-being of children and were thus a risk factor for violence against children, as had been discussed in various regional forums.

66. The mandate of the proposed special representative of the Secretary-General (A/61/299, para. 120) was a matter for Member States to consider. That mandate should be assumed by someone with a high-level position in the international community in order to maintain the momentum of regional consultations, the involvement of countries, NGOs and the relevant agencies, including ILO, UNESCO and OHCHR. It was imperative to act swiftly in deciding on a mechanism to ensure the continuation of the current process.

67. As to the recent conflict in Lebanon, he pointed out that it had erupted after his study had been completed. He hoped that the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict would give due consideration to the suggestion regarding that situation.

68. He agreed that it was important to discuss how armed conflict affected children and welcomed Egypt's proposal to hold a conference on that issue.

69. It was important to bear in mind parenting initiatives, such as the experiences mentioned by the United States, in efforts for the protection of children. Governments and civil society played a key role in that regard. The Syrian Arab Republic's plan of action on violence against children was also a valuable contribution. He also referred the Committee to the work of Save the Children, which had published a number of reports and prepared kits to train parents on alternative approaches to children's education.

70. He agreed on the need for coordination between the work on violence against children and on violence against women, and that had been ensured in preparing his study. The common recommendations of the two relevant studies needed to be considered together.

71. He welcomed the regional follow-up consultations that had taken place in Egypt and South Asia, and the initiatives of the Council of Europe, the Organization of American States and the League of Arab States.

72. He hoped that the recommendations in the study could be implemented in the next four years, including that related to national data collection.

73. **Ms. Veneman** (Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)), replying to the questions and comments, said that UNICEF had endeavoured to provide assistance to Governments and parliaments to ensure that they implemented legislation in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and worked closely with organizations such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) on such issues as trafficking in children. Legislators should address the issues of violence against children on a global basis and identify the types of laws that would effectively protect children against various forms of violence.

74. UNICEF had a reform initiative in place to see how it could work more directly in countries to help them to pass and implement appropriate laws and regulations. She also stressed the need for effective enforcement of those laws and for the proper training of law-enforcement agencies and cooperation between them and health-care institutions.

75. With regard to alternative ways of disciplining children, that could be part of a more general, community-based approach which could also include teaching women about breastfeeding and how to care for themselves during pregnancy. Community-based initiatives were the appropriate venue for addressing cultural norms.

76. **Dr. Nordström** (Acting Director-General of the World Health Organization) said that the study and the current discussion made it clear that the situation regarding violence against children was unacceptable. The measures to address it were clear; what was needed was immediate action and collaboration across the United Nations system and with Member States.

77. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to begin its general discussion of agenda item 63.

78. **Ms. Fraser-Moleketi** (South Africa) said that South Africa had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, as well as other relevant international and regional instruments. The Constitution provided for the promotion and protection of children's rights, and relevant issues were addressed through the Presidency's Office on the Rights of the Child.

79. South Africa had held national and regional consultations on the study on the violence against children, and supported its recommendations in principle.

80. Among South Africa's achievements to ensure the prevention of violence against children was its abolition of corporal punishment, the adoption of the South African Schools Act to ensure safety in schools, and other initiatives to ensure that a spirit of care and support was fostered.

81. To address violence against children in the home and family, it was important to take an innovative approach, through healthy parenting, education and the empowerment of children, as that type of violence was difficult to detect. In that regard, a culture of listening to and hearing children needed to be fostered.

82. The Constitution also provided guidance in embracing different traditions and customs to promote communities that were protective of children.

83. Government ministries, with the help of NGOs, played a pivotal role in the implementation of "diversion programmes", which had helped to divert more than 150,000 children from the criminal-justice system. It was, furthermore, illegal to employ children under the age of 15, and children over that age were protected under the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and other international standards such as those adopted by ILO. Nevertheless, there was a lack of regulation for children over 15 employed in the informal economy, including domestic workers and farm labourers.

84. Member States needed to make resources available and coordinate their strategies for the protection of children by sharing best practices. What was missing was the political will to implement the commitments made to eliminate violence against children in all its forms.

85. **Ms. Khan Williams** (United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that she agreed with South Africa on the comprehensive approach that needed to be adopted in addressing children's rights. The best way to follow up the recommendations in the study on violence against children was to conduct country-by-country reviews, in order to assess the measures that were appropriate or needed revising.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/61/SR.14

General Assembly
Sixty-first session

Official Records

Distr.: General
2 November 2006

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 14th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 12 October 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Faati (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Gambia)

Contents

Agenda item 63: Promotion and protection of the rights of children

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

06-56650 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq), Mr. Faati (Gambia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 53: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/61/303)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/61/41, and Corr.1 and Add.1, A/61/207, A/61/275, A/61/275/Corr.1 and A/61/299)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (A/61/270)

Statement by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

1. **Ms. Coomaraswamy** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), introducing her report (A/61/275), said that, over the past year, considerable progress had been made to promote the application of internationally recognized protection standards to children affected by armed conflict, including the establishment of a monitoring and reporting system. However, further efforts were needed to ensure that impunity for crimes against children during times of conflict was not tolerated. It was encouraging to note that since the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, eight additional countries had ratified the Optional Protocol of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. She urged those Member States that had not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to consider doing so.

2. She highlighted section II of the report, touched on the strategic plan of her Office in section IV and noted that with the end of the first phase of implementation of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) the geographical scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism must be broadened to all situations where grave violations were being perpetrated against children in armed conflict.

3. She hoped that the annual omnibus resolution on the rights of the child, especially the segment on children and armed conflict, would reflect the recommendations contained in section VII of the report.

4. In the past, all combatants had created a humanitarian space for the protection of children. Tragically, the world had entered an era where the basic principles of international humanitarian law were being called into question and little distinction was made between civilians and combatants. All Member States and non-State actors were urged to abide by internationally recognized rules of war so that children would be protected in times of conflict.

5. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) said it was disturbing that certain bodies had attempted to usurp the mandate of the General Assembly and had turned the protection of children into a politicized and selective process. In his view, States should be involved in the drafting of reports. In that regard, he wished to know what sources of information the Special Representative had used in the preparation of her report. Turning to paragraph 14 and the reference to a "deliberate strategy of humiliation and ethnic cleansing", he noted that, while there was a humanitarian crisis in Darfur, that crisis was being caused by the parties that had not signed the peace agreement. The Special Representative should therefore revise the paragraph, since its contents were biased, politicized and unspecific.

6. His delegation rejected any linkage between Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and the issue of children and armed conflict. In that regard, it should be borne in mind that Security Council and General Assembly deliberations were separate. Finally, his delegation was against the targeting of specific States and regretted the fact that the report highlighted negative rather than positive information. It was also disappointed that the report failed to address the problem of post-conflict management.

7. **Ms. Pohjankukka** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, sought further clarification regarding the role of the General Assembly in mainstreaming children and armed conflict in the United Nations system. She wondered whether there was a need for more "time-bound action plans" to ensure the implementation of standards on the ground and, if so, what the most appropriate tools at the national level would be. Finally, she would appreciate further information regarding the implementation of the strategic framework in the promotion of rights-based protection for children.

8. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) said it was disappointing that the Special Representative's report had

not provided more details on the sufferings of the Palestinian children living under foreign occupation. Her delegation had repeatedly called upon the Office of the Special Representative to visit the Occupied Palestinian Territory and witness first-hand the systematic human rights violations committed by Israel. It would therefore like the Special Representative to indicated how she planned to address the situation.

9. **Ms. Coomaraswamy** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said that she agreed with the representative of the Sudan regarding the central role of the General Assembly, recalling that the mandate for her Office originated with that body. However, it was important to bear in mind that there were other forums for action such as the Security Council, the Human Rights Council, the International Criminal Court and United Nations agencies. With respect to the participation of Member States in the drafting of reports, her Office had instituted a new policy whereby the contents of all reports were shared with Member States before the final report was issued.

10. As regarded Darfur, a separate report on the Sudan had been submitted to the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict. The information in that report had been verified by actors on the ground, including United Nations agencies. As for the "deliberate strategy" mentioned in paragraph 14, while the main actors in the Darfur situation were non-State actors, it was also a well-known fact that some of those non-State actors had close associations with the Sudanese Government. The representative of the Sudan should rest assured that there was no linkage between the Office of the Special Representative and the monitoring and reporting process called for in Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). The only political agenda concerning the Office was the protection of children.

11. Finally, she agreed that not enough attention was being paid to the post-conflict rehabilitation and reintegration of children. Clearly, there was a need for the United Nations system to move beyond the naming and shaming exercise and develop a sustained involvement so that countries could recover from post-conflict situations.

12. In response to the question from the representative of Finland, she said that continued General Assembly support for the mandate of the Office of the Special Representative would ensure that it examined all situations of concern. With regard to action plans, her Office and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) were considering establishing a checklist of specific actions that countries must take in order to make the transition from conflict to demobilization. The Office was indeed concerned about rights-based promotion at the field level, in particular with respect to girl and internally displaced children. In future, the Office planned to focus more on research and hoped to begin a ten-year evaluation study in 2007, provided that funds became available. Lastly, she planned to visit Lebanon, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory in November 2006.

13. **Mr. Babadoudou** (Benin) said that his delegation looked forward to the midterm review of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. Upon the establishment of the mechanism, it had been agreed that it would be limited to African situations. It was hoped that its scope would be expanded to cover all aspects, so that the international community would be apprised of the facts on the ground and, in particular, the plans to move to the next phase, namely the implementation of sanctions.

14. **Ms. Adjalova** (Azerbaijan) said that, while her delegation supported certain priority areas outlined in the Special Representative's report, including measures addressing the needs of girls and internally displaced and refugee children, it felt that future reports should focus on frozen and protracted conflict situations and their impact on children.

15. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) said that, while his delegation was willing to cooperate with the Special Representative and welcomed her decision to visit the Sudan, it was displeased, as noted earlier, at being singled out in paragraph 14. Negative and inaccurate statements merely delayed the peace process.

16. **Ms. Coomaraswamy** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) expressed agreement with the representative of Azerbaijan on the need to ensure sustained livelihoods for persons in protracted and post-conflict situations. However, her Office had focused on the immediate need to demobilize child soldiers and punish perpetrators because of the gravity of the situation. It had initiated a dialogue with the Peacebuilding Commission and the United Nations

Development Programme on protracted and post-conflict situations and hoped to accomplish more in that area in the future.

17. **Ms. Pohjankukka** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, said that the European Union attached great importance to the worldwide implementation of the objectives of "A World Fit for Children". States which had not yet ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols were urged to do so. The European Union remained concerned about the large number of reservations to the Convention. Reservations, especially those incompatible with the object and purpose of the treaties, should be withdrawn or their scope limited.

18. The European Union continued to work closely with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and with UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and other actors, including non-governmental organizations, to ensure better protection for all children. Cooperation of that kind was essential.

19. She hoped the report of the Secretary-General on violence against children, with its accompanying recommendations to States, the United Nations system and civil society, would bring about necessary action at all levels to protect children against all forms of physical and psychological violence.

20. On the question of child labour, the report reminded its readers that children should not even be in the workplace. There was much to be done to improve the situation of the 200 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 who were still working in 2004, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), and especially those working in extremely hazardous conditions. An ILO report entitled "The end of child labour: Within reach" recorded some recent improvement in the numbers, which had fallen by about 11 per cent over a four-year period, and by 25 per cent in the case of children engaged in the worst forms of child labour. The European Union encouraged States, as a matter of priority, to sign and ratify the ILO Conventions concerning the minimum age for admission to employment and on elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

21. Of special concern were the 1.2 million children who became victims of trafficking of children each year, according to the ILO. Many of them were forced into commercial sexual exploitation or other forms of labour. According to a current UNICEF report, "The State of the World's Children 2006: Excluded and invisible", exploited children were prevented by their abusers from making their situation known. The European Union was combating trafficking through international and regional forums, legislation and funding programmes.

22. Welcoming the report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, she urged States to criminalize and penalize effectively all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse of children, and to address the needs of the children concerned and the root causes of the problem. States were encouraged to consider signing and ratifying the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

23. The European Union supported initiatives to raise awareness of the plight of children exploited in armed conflicts, including the follow-up to the Security Council's request to the Secretary-General to implement the monitoring and reporting mechanism on the use of child soldiers. The European Union was considering ways of implementing that resolution through its own European Security and Defence Policy operations. It was committed to cooperating actively with the newly appointed United Nations Special Representative on Children in Armed Conflict. States were urged to speed up their ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, whereby sexual violence and the enlistment of children under 15 to the armed forces were categories of war crime. All perpetrators of crimes against children in armed conflicts must be brought to justice, with special attention to the situation of girls.

24. She commended the efforts of the Secretary-General to address sexual exploitation and abuse affecting staff and related personnel of the United Nations. Member States and troop-contributing countries had a special

responsibility to train and hold accountable members of national contingents. The European Union was committed to combating the problem through action of its own, especially the EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict and the involvement of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) and the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). The European Union had its own programmes aimed at disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, including back-to-school and anti-trafficking initiatives and psychosocial support.

25. **Mr. Mbuende** (Namibia), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), expressed the full support of SADC for the establishment of the mechanism of Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. SADC Governments had incorporated the goals of "A World Fit for Children" into their national development programmes and poverty reduction strategies, and were continuously working to achieve the goals of the Millennium Declaration. They placed special emphasis on children's development needs and on the provision of quality education and health services, and on implementing national laws and policies to protect children from abuse, exploitation and violence. The SADC Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women and Children, and the SADC Charter on Fundamental Social Rights, guaranteed the individual rights enshrined in the relevant international instruments. A SADC Protocol on Cooperation in Education and Training supplemented national efforts at providing quality education, for which the United Nations and other partners were providing welcome and very necessary support.

26. The 1999 SADC Protocol on Health played a crucial role in the attainment of acceptable standards of health for children. Together with UNICEF and other partners, SADC Member States were working to put in place sustainable immunization campaigns against poliomyelitis, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. The campaigns had helped to sensitize people to the importance of primary health care, but must be followed up by meaningful investment in the health sector. The HIV/AIDS pandemic had resulted in a growing number of orphans and infected children. He appealed to cooperating partners to continue supporting efforts within SADC to fight the pandemic, in the light of commitments made during the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS.

27. Children were always among the first to be affected by armed conflicts. The advances made in applying the international standards and norms to protect them must be consolidated. Much more must be done to address the problem of child soldiers, and more resources invested in conflict prevention and resolution.

28. Among the major concerns of SADC was trafficking in human beings, including children, within countries and across international borders. Regional and international human rights mechanisms must be further strengthened to deal with the problem. Attention should continue to be given to the protection of refugee children and other displaced children throughout the world.

29. SADC welcomed the draft Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which should ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. He hoped it would be adopted by the General Assembly.

30. **Ms. Otani** (Japan) said that her country was fully committed to the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on children. The Government of Japan had made the promotion of human security an important pillar of its foreign policy. With the United Nations, it had decided to extend assistance amounting to $977,874 to the joint United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/World Health Organization (UNESCO/WHO) project on capacity-building for the psychological, pedagogical and medico-social rehabilitation of children and teachers in Chechnya. It was significant that children had contributed from their own experience to the report of the Independent Expert on violence against children. Her Government hoped that the information in the report would be widely disseminated and that all Member States would take urgent action to tackle violence against children. Japan was making great efforts to combat the increasing prevalence of child abuse and child prostitution. In 2001 it had hosted the 2nd World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and in 2004 it had revised its legislation on child abuse and child welfare.

31. The world was increasingly aware of the problems of children affected by armed conflicts. Her Government welcomed the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict in five African countries, which she

hoped would provide objective and reliable information on the situation there. It was important to focus on assisting reintegration programmes for former child soldiers. In February 2006, Japan had provided assistance through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for such a reintegration project in the Great Lakes region and it would continue to work closely with other Member States, international organizations and civil society to improve the situation of children in armed conflict.

32. Many children were affected by natural disasters and excluded as a result from essential goods and services. In 2005 Japan had implemented a support plan for child victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami. The plan focused on child protection, including measures against human trafficking and to enable children to survive by combating infectious diseases. On the basis of its experience, Japan would seek to make further contributions in that area.

33. **Ms. Khatab** (Egypt) said that her country had been among the first 20 States to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It had played an active part in national, regional and international efforts to bring about the United Nations study on violence against children. Regional activities had been coordinated by the Egyptian National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, and a regional consultation meeting had been held in Cairo in June 2005. Countries in her region were committed to implementing the recommendations of the report of the Independent Expert. Egypt had its own National Committee to Eliminate Violence against Children, encompassing Government representatives, non-governmental organizations, media professionals, and leaders of opinion and religion. The Committee had agreed on a zero tolerance policy towards violence against children, and a national plan of action to eliminate all forms of violence against children had been adopted in 2006. Sincere efforts were being made to break the silence which had long surrounded certain forms of violence, such as early and forced marriages, domestic violence and female genital mutilation.

34. A Child Help Line had been launched in June 2005. It was a 24-hour service which could be accessed freely by any child in Egypt. Every complaint received the immediate and careful attention of trained professionals. Parents, teachers and professionals working with and for children now realized the value of listening to children and taking their views into account, in line with article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The report of the Independent Expert on violence against children was now being translated into Arabic. Egypt supported the appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children, as recommended in the report. Violence against children living under occupation in Palestine and Lebanon should be given high priority in future action to implement its recommendations.

35. **Mr. Amil** (Pakistan) said that any kind of violence against children exacted great cost from society. It could result in lifelong social and health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder, anti-social and aggressive behaviour, impaired performance at school and later at work, and greater involvement in crime. The vision of safer communities for children required a multifaceted approach primarily based at national level, with strong support from the international community and the United Nations. Such an approach should focus on promoting an agenda for implementing the Millennium Development Goals, and especially for combating the major health risks such as HIV/AIDS; resolving conflicts, which had resulted in disability, exploitation, sexual violence and displacement among many thousands of children, including the enrolment of 250,000 children as child soldiers; effective measures to defeat malaria and other diseases and to reduce mortality among under fives through immunization and improved maternal health; and achieving the Millennium target for education, in a world where an estimated 150 million primary school-age children, including 62 million girls, were still out of school.

36. As a result of the South Asian regional consultation held in Islamabad in May 2005 in preparation for the study of the Independent Expert, there was now a South Asia Forum for Ending Violence against Children, with representatives from the eight countries in the region, and a group working on violence against children. The first meeting of the Forum, held in August 2006, had focused on early marriages and physical and psychological violence against children.

37. Pakistan had adopted several measures to eradicate violence against children and promote the rights of the child. It had amended its criminal law to outlaw early and forced marriages and was a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC),

the core conventions of ILO, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia and the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution. It had a National Commission for Child Welfare and Development to promote the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and a national plan of action to address key issues of child protection. Corporal punishment and all forms of harsh treatment of children in schools had been banned. Education was free up to the tenth grade, and the literacy drive placed equal emphasis on girls. The national plan of action, called "Education for All" aimed for universal primary school enrolment by 2015. To encourage education for girls, special incentives such as free uniforms, textbooks and school meals were available. In the health sector, the immunization campaign now covered 77 per cent of children. In collaboration with ILO, the private sector and civil society, child labour had been eradicated in football manufacturing and in the carpet industry and efforts were being made to eradicate it from the manufacture of surgical products.

38. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) said that the recommendations of the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children should be incorporated into national laws and used as a basis for international cooperation on that issue. Information gathering for the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict should be impartial and free from politicization. Special attention must be paid to the needs of children not only during armed conflicts but also in post-conflict situations. The Sudan's framework document, "A Sudan fit for children", which incorporated the goals of the 2002 United Nations Special Session on Children's final resolution on "A world fit for children", reflected the Sudan's commitment to the relevant Millennium Development Goals and to regional conventions on children. Care for children was a religious, national and humanitarian obligation. Child welfare in the Sudan was supervised by the National Council on Child Welfare in coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs and regional agencies. A children's parliament had been proposed as a platform for children to express their views and concerns and prepare them for future involvement in decision-making as adult citizens. He commended United Nations and regional agencies, in particular UNICEF, for their food, health and education programmes, and looked forward to greater international cooperation as a climate of peace was established in the south and Darfur. He expressed concern over the plight of Arab children under foreign occupation in Palestine and the occupied Syrian Golan and of Lebanese children following the vicious massacres perpetrated by Israel in Lebanon.

39. **Mr. Degia** (Barbados), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that investing in its children was one of the best investments a government could make; the future survival of mankind depended in fact on how the international community safeguarded the children of the world. He therefore commended the United Nations for its efforts to make the Convention on the Rights of the Child a universal instrument and to increase the capacity of States to implement the provisions of the Convention.

40. The situation of children nevertheless continued to be a source of great concern, as shown in the report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children (A/61/270). The failure of many States to achieve the Millennium Development Goals was to a considerable extent the result of structural problems such as an unfair and unequal international trading system and a lack of democracy and transparency in the international financial and economic systems. Unless those problems were resolved, the developing world would continue to lag behind the developed world and children would suffer the most.

41. In order to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, the next ten years must be years of implementation and collective mobilization. He therefore commended the Secretary-General for recommending a number of additional targets which would facilitate the monitoring of progress towards achieving those Goals. Although developing countries bore primary responsibility for their development, national efforts must be complemented by a supportive international system, including improved global governance, greater coherence in United Nations operations and a greater voice for the United Nations in global development policy. The commitments relating to increased financial resources for development made at the Gleneagles G-8 Summit in 2005 and at the World Summit 2005 must likewise be implemented and he urged the developed countries to meet the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance (ODA). Until globalization and

liberalization were made more inclusive and their benefits more equitably distributed, children would continue to suffer.

42. Underscoring the threat to development posed by the scourge of HIV/AIDS, he noted that in some areas of the world the effects of HIV/AIDS were reversing the gains made in the area of child mortality. The Caribbean Community countries had made the fight against that threat to their young people and their future a priority and he called for the allocation of more resources to that issue. He therefore welcomed the adoption of the Political Declaration on AIDS by the General Assembly in June 2006 and said the Declaration must be implemented as a matter of urgency.

43. The CARICOM countries were allocating whatever limited financial resources were available to combating HIV/AIDS; all member States had National AIDS Programmes aimed inter alia at reducing mother-to-child transmission and public education programmes had also been launched. The CARICOM countries considered education to be a fundamental right as well as a tool to increase awareness of AIDS, combat child labour and promote development. Throughout the region, primary and secondary education were free and in most cases attendance was mandatory between the ages of 5 and 16. Both boys and girls had equal access to education and sporting activities.

44. **Mr. Adekanye** (Nigeria) expressed concern at the difficult situation of children in many parts of the world as depicted in the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children (A/61/299), stressed the urgent need to implement the recommendations made by the independent expert and expressed support for the appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children.

45. Although promotion of the rights of the child was a shared responsibility of the international community, national governments bore the primary responsibility for providing the juridical framework needed to guarantee children's rights. His Government had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992, adopted a Child Rights Act in 2003 and strengthened legal protections for children's rights in all the states of the federation. It had also adopted the Trafficking in Persons Act and established the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking of Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP), which inter alia combated trafficking in children and child labour and operated a rehabilitation and reintegration programme for child victims of trafficking.

46. More than 65 million of Nigeria's population of 140 million were children and his Government, which considered education to be a basic human right as well as a development tool, had implemented the Universal Basic Education Programme, which guaranteed compulsory, free education for children up to the junior secondary level. A national health-care system which provided free medical facilities to children was also seen as an investment in the country's future. Children had the right to be heard on issues affecting their well-being; for example, the Nigerian Children's Parliament, inaugurated in 2000, met quarterly to discuss topical issues. In addition, on 27 May 2006, National Children's Day, the Parliament had organized a seminar on HIV/AIDS and children and presented an action plan to the President.

47. **Mr. Hatem** (Iraq) said that children who were aware of their rights as children would make better future citizens. Iraq was party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, whose principles had been incorporated into the new Iraqi Constitution; a committee had recommended Iraq's accession to the two Optional Protocols on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Pornography. The transitional Government was focusing on primary health care, vaccination in rural areas and hospital capacity-building. By the end of the first quarter of 2006, over 150 new vaccination centres had been planned and during the two polio vaccination campaigns conducted in the summer of 2005 virtually all of the targeted 4.7 million children had been vaccinated.

48. The ministries of education and higher education had taken major steps to improve the education system, training tens of thousands of teachers, renovating thousands of schools and opening dozens of model schools, all of which had led to a noticeable increase in enrolment. There were many ongoing renovation projects in the university sector as well. However, the security situation continued to be a serious impediment to progress in those areas. He appealed to friendly nations and international organizations to help Iraq build a better future for the next generation.

49. **Mr. Sardenberg** (Brazil) said that no effort must be spared to ensure proper follow-up to the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children. An important first step was to admit the problem existed and make a commitment to confront it. He agreed with the independent expert that no form of violence against children was acceptable, noting that his Government had established several hotlines to encourage reporting of violence against children, including sexual exploitation and pornography on the Internet. The police had also received special training in receiving complaints and prosecuting offences against children and adolescents. The juvenile justice system would be adapted to promote social reintegration by reducing rates of institutionalization through the use of community-based alternatives and by keeping families intact.

50. The Child Labour Eradication Programme, based on ILO Convention No. 138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, provided stipends to families for keeping children in school and promoted after-school activities. As a result, the rate of child labour for the 5 to 9 and 10 to 17 age groups had dropped by 61 per cent and 36 per cent respectively between 1992 and 2004. The establishment of the Network to Combat Sexual Violence against Children and Adolescents had led to the creation of centres for the care of children, adolescents and families exposed to sexual violence, especially in areas where trafficking occurred and in border areas. In addition, awareness campaigns had been undertaken, the hotline system had been strengthened and more training and resources had been provided to social workers. Teachers were also being trained to deal with such issues as violence, neglect, abandonment, abuse and exploitation.

51. His Government's response to violence against children was based on a public health approach. Medical personnel reported any suspected cases to the Guardianship Council for referral to the appropriate authorities and the Ministry of Health's Family Health Programme offered outreach services to prevent domestic violence. Furthermore, the Congress was considering a law to prohibit corporal punishment in the home. At the international level, his Government had recently hosted an expert meeting on the draft United Nations guidelines for the protection and alternative care of children without parental care.

52. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh) said that his Government, which was committed to the rights of children, was a party to ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. A separate ministry was devoted to the welfare of women and children and the National Policy on Children of 1994 enunciated the country's commitments, while the Primary Education Act of 1990 enshrined the right to education. Girls' education had been given the highest priority, with tuition fees for girls waived up to the twelfth grade. Gender parity had been achieved in the schools, the Government was currently focusing on improving the quality of education at all levels, with an emphasis on the inclusion of handicapped children in mainstream institutions. Child mortality and malnutrition had been reduced and maternal health improved. Polio had been eradicated and iodine deficiency was declining. Vitamin A supplements and oral rehydration therapy had saved millions of children's lives.

53. Children in Bangladesh nevertheless remained vulnerable as a result of poverty, trafficking, exploitation and violence. Capacities must be strengthened to address children's issues and his Government had identified four objectives: create opportunities for children's development, including through access to basic services; promotion of the best interests of the child in all situations; safety and security; protection of children's rights. A multi-sectoral approach would be used to meet those goals.

54. Child labour laws, especially the Children Act 1974 and the Children Rules 1976, were strictly enforced, including in the garment industry, and efforts to eliminate child labour in the informal sectors through non-formal education were under way. Other noteworthy initiatives included the "Appropriate Resources for Improvement of Street Children's Environment" (ARISE), a project undertaken by the Ministry of Welfare with the assistance of UNDP, the establishment of a parliamentary Standing Committee, to supervise women's and children's affairs and the designation of the decade 2001-2010 as the Decade of the Rights of the Child in Bangladesh and the celebration of 30 September as "Girl Child Day".

55. At the regional level, Bangladesh had ratified the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution and was a signatory to the SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare. He stressed the need to focus on the situation of children affected by armed conflict and the rights of children living under foreign occupation and to deal with the scourges of trafficking and violence. As the main sponsor of the annual resolution on the international decade for a culture of peace and non-violence for the children of the world, his delegation hoped that the draft resolution would enjoy wide support.

56. **Ms. Guo** Xiaomei (China) said that despite the progress achieved, many challenges remained in the protection of children's rights. The international community must enhance cooperation to promote children's rights and eliminate the root causes of violations of those rights. The developed countries in particular should assume a greater role and provide the developing countries with financial and technical help to create a favourable environment for the healthy growth of the world's children.

57. Chinese children represented one fifth of the world total and her Government was conscious of its obligation to its children. The domestic juridical framework for the protection of children's rights included the Constitution, the Civil Affairs Act, the Adoption Act, the Protection of Minors Act and the Compulsory Education Act. A nationwide system for children's affairs included all relevant government departments, with the Working Committee of the State Council on Women's and Children's Affairs playing a leading role. The current Ten-Year Programme of Development for Children 2001-2010 was aimed at meeting the commitments made at the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children through concrete measures in such areas as health, education, legislation and the environment.

58. Further progress had been made in 2006. In September the revised Compulsory Education Act, containing provisions on optimal allocation of resources to ensure the balanced development of the educational system, had come into effect. A draft revision of the Protection of Minors Act had been submitted to the Standing Committee of the People's Congress in August. The draft enshrined the principles of putting children first and the best interests of the child and confirmed children's fundamental rights.

59. China had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991, ratified the Optional Protocol to that Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and was considering ratification of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. It had also ratified ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Inter-Country Adoption.

60. In September 2005 the Committee on the Rights of the Child had considered the second periodic report of China; her Government was taking steps to implement the Committee's recommendations and was working with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to follow up the Committee's consideration of the report. Her Government looked forward to continued fruitful cooperation with the Committee but urged the Committee to treat with caution information coming through various channels as such information could be misleading. Although China was undergoing a period of economic and social transition and there were still social problems, disparities and varying levels of development in the country, her Government would continue to join the international community in its efforts to build a world fit for children.

61. **Mr. Kirn** (Slovenia), speaking on behalf of the Human Security Network countries, as well as of South Africa, welcomed the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children as the first consolidated effort within the United Nations to shed light on that problem and to engage directly with children in that regard.

62. Violence against children was a violation of their basic human rights; remedying the root causes of that multidimensional phenomenon would require a systematic, coordinated and inclusive approach wherever violence occurred. Violence against children often remained hidden, due mainly to children's vulnerability and lack of power and voice. The establishment of adequate child-friendly and gender-sensitive reporting mechanisms was therefore crucial.

63. Violence had long-term consequences for the health and development of children and for their chances of leading a normal life. Child victims of violence also were more likely to show violent behaviour as adults. Follow-up to the report must therefore be effective. Since violence against children

existed everywhere an effective multisectoral response was essential, with strong and coordinated leadership, first and foremost by governments. The issue of violence against children must remain high on the international agenda and all possibilities for follow-up, including the appointment of a special representative, must be considered.

64. **Ms. Banks** (New Zealand) said that New Zealand had established a ministerial-level team on family violence which was committed to a whole-of-government response to the problem. The ministerial team was advised by a task force for action on violence within families. In addition, the Working for Families package was a significant government initiative designed to reduce family poverty which would benefit around 75 per cent of all New Zealand families with children. Early intervention to support vulnerable young children and their families was a priority for the Government, which was implementing prevention strategies through a policy called the Early Years approach. The aim was to build a comprehensive system of early intervention services for all children under the age of six, especially vulnerable children and their families, including their extended families.

65. **Ms. Tchitanava** (Georgia) said that the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been incorporated into Georgia's national legislation. The Ministries of Education and Health, Labour and Social Care, along with the local authorities and municipalities, all cooperated closely with the international organizations on issues relating to the rights of children, education, literacy, human rights education, children's health, parent education, vaccination and other humanitarian affairs.

66. A difficult economic situation and conflict in the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia had made it difficult for the Government to address all the needs of young people. In that regard, the support of the international community with respect to training and assistance projects aimed at advancing child and maternal health care, HIV/AIDS prevention and education, reducing infant and child mortality and malnutrition, and improving education had been especially valuable. Along with environmental issues and the empowerment of women, health care and education were the main targets of the Georgian Government as it strove to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Indeed, Georgia's health care scores had improved since 2000, thanks to the joint efforts of the Government and United Nations agencies, including UNICEF, immunization rates had increased to 70-80 per cent for the most common diseases.

67. A bill had been submitted to Parliament that would make domestic violence a criminal offence. In 2005, anti-trafficking legislation had been adopted, and a plan for reducing the number of institutionalized children had been approved. The Government was also trying to resolve the problem of refugee and internally displaced children, as well as children living in conflict zones. The separatist regime in Abkhazia prohibited Georgian children from studying in their mother tongue. While the central authorities, in cooperation with international donor organizations, were able to provide special rehabilitation, education and leisure programmes to those children and to some from the conflict zones, the vast majority of them were still beyond the coverage of those programmes.

68. Georgia had high rates of enrolment for both genders in adult literacy programmes and primary, secondary and higher education. In 2005, the Georgian Parliament had passed a law on general education which provided the framework for an inclusive educational system. She expressed concern over the blatant discrimination against Georgian citizens and ethnic Georgians studying in both Georgia and the Russian Federation, including the recent abrupt termination by the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation of the studies and contracts of 70 students and 25 teachers, respectively, at a Russian school in Tbilisi; and the establishment by the Russian Ministry of the Interior of a list of names of all ethnic Georgian schoolchildren to be used by the police for exercising special controls over such children and their families. Furthermore, Georgian students in various Russian universities were persecuted by police during lectures and detained without any specific charges.

69. The Russian authorities had also started profiling Georgian citizens, who were humiliated, including by publicly being checked for sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS before being deported on cargo planes in the full glare of the media spotlight. In that regard, children were often left alone in hospitals without their parents for several hours. Those who were attempting to involve children in conflicts between governments were violating the most sanctified values of mankind. In a world where the efforts of the international community were directed

towards strengthening peace and security, promoting human rights, addressing development and providing children with a safe and dignified childhood, those kinds of actions were unacceptable.

70. **Mr. Solorzano** (Nicaragua) said it was essential that Member States implement the recommendations contained in the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children by taking concrete steps to protect children against violence. The problems affecting children in Central America, such as youth gangs, drugs and crime had their roots in the ill-treatment children suffered and in the poverty that afflicted the region. That negative situation hindered normal human development, weakened the family unit, affected human dignity and prevented the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and poverty reduction.

71. His Government was deeply concerned and acknowledged its responsibility for tackling the problem of violence against children, including through legislation. Civil society and non-governmental organizations could also play a role but he underscored the critical need for national efforts to be supported by regional and international partners in order to make available resources for local capacity-building to meet that challenge.

72. The recommendations contained in the report of the independent expert, including the appointment of a special representative, provided a sound basis for efforts to eliminate violence against children. The problem however would be implementation and he reiterated that the international community must be prepared to work together and to allocate adequate resources to meeting the goal of eliminating violence against children.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/61/SR.15

General Assembly
Sixty-first session

Official Records

Distr.: General
9 November 2006

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 15th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 13 October 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Al Bayati ..... (Iraq)

Contents

Agenda item 63: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(b) Follow-up to the special session on children (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

06-56656 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 63: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/61/303)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/61/41 and Corr.1 and Add.1, 207, 275 and Corr.1 and 299)

(b) Follow-up to the special session on children (*continued*) (A/61/270)

1. **Mr. Doek** (Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child) recalled that General Assembly resolution 59/261 had authorized the Committee on the Rights of the Child to meet in two chambers, as a temporary and exceptional measure, in order to clear its backlog of reports. He was pleased to provide an assessment of the progress made over the past two years, while drawing attention to the report on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/61/207) and the biennial report of the Committee (A/61/41), the thematic focus of which was the trends and challenges of the implementation process with respect to children affected by armed conflict.

2. The Committee on the Rights of the Child had worked hard to enhance its methods of work and to dispel concerns raised over its innovative approach. While its burden was considerable, the quality of its work had been maintained and information exchanges between the two chambers had been successful. Feedback from delegations, United Nations agencies and programmes and non-governmental organizations had been positive and supportive and he thanked them for their contributions to the Committee's work and governments for their national follow-up to its recommendations.

3. United Nations conference and document processing services had had to redouble their efforts to meet the increased demands placed on interpreters, press officers, précis-writers and others by the new approach. The document workload had roughly doubled and had been subject to tight deadlines. Occasionally, delegations had had to be content with obtaining documents at the last moment and in a limited number of working languages. That issue would require careful scrutiny, were the Committee to work in two chambers again at some point, as it was imperative that the relevant services should be adequately equipped to handle the increased workload. The Secretariat of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) had also been put under considerable pressure by the additional workload.

4. The Committee on the Rights of the Child was confident that the decision to meet in two chambers had served its main purpose of reducing the backlog of reports significantly. Twenty-four reports were currently pending consideration, and even a larger number would be manageable. Three years previously, the time lag between the submission and the consideration of reports had been two or more years, but that had been reduced to one year or less. He therefore thanked the General Assembly for providing the opportunity to work in two chambers. Since 179 reports were now overdue but could be expected to be submitted in the coming years, a decision might have to be taken in due course on whether to resume working in two chambers.

5. He commended the contribution of the independent expert on violence against children and his team to the study on violence against children and expressed gratitude for the support provided by regional and intergovernmental bodies, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and Member States through their comprehensive responses to the questionnaire on that subject and crucial financial contributions. He fully supported the study's recommendations and called on all Member States to implement them, although he was aware that some States might need more time and support than others to do so. It was equally important for Member States to support action at the United Nations level to combat violence against children by appointing a special representative as a visible advocate for children worldwide.

6. On the issue of treaty-body reform, the Committee on the Rights of the Child would remain committed to the efforts of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to improve current practices with a view to achieving more harmonized working methods and greater effectiveness.

7. **Ms. Pohjankukka** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union was pleased that the reorganization of the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child into two chambers had reduced the backlog of reports, thereby

ensuring more timely consideration of States' actions in the area of the promotion and protection of the rights of children, which was at the heart of the European Union's human rights policy.

8. Referring to paragraph 19 of the report of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, she asked what specific measures were needed to ensure positive reinforcement and enhanced cooperation with the United Nations system with regard to the monitoring and reporting of the rights of children affected by armed conflict. She would also like to know how cooperation between the Committee and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict could be further enhanced and whether there was also room for cooperation with regional human rights monitoring mechanisms in that regard.

9. She wished to know whether, as an outcome of its cooperation with the various human rights mechanisms mentioned in paragraph 41 of the report, there were any specific issues that the Committee on the Rights of the Child wished to highlight in its future work. On the matter of overdue reports, she asked what measures the international community could take to ensure timely reporting by States parties.

10. **Mr. Doek** (Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child) drew attention to the Committee's recommendations, which showed that the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict sought to secure an international commitment by States parties to preventing the recruitment and involvement of children in hostilities. He expected to meet with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in order to reinforce their cooperation and also with members of the Security Council with a view to the monitoring of situations of armed conflict in terms of compliance with the Optional Protocol.

11. With regard to specific issues to be highlighted in the Committee's future work, he said that poverty was a major obstacle to the implementation of the Convention and its Optional Protocols. Developing countries faced the predicament of lacking capacity in terms of funding, human resources and expertise and the Committee had therefore decided to devote its next day of discussions to certain aspects of article 4 of the Convention.

12. Turning to the issue of overdue reports, he said that rather than reprimanding States parties that were overdue in their reporting obligations, the Committee sought to help them overcome the obstacles they faced through a number of approaches. Such an outreach strategy was highly productive, as it created a momentum for the implementation of the Convention.

13. **Mr. Tulbure** (Moldova) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which had been adopted so enthusiastically, was the most widely violated international treaty in the world. Every five seconds, a child died of hunger, malnutrition or disease. Millions of children were victims of domestic violence. Children were used as child soldiers, were left to languish in orphanages and detention centres, were forced to work, were sexually assaulted, were abandoned or had no access to education or health care.

14. He wondered how that situation could be tolerated and whether such abuses were not crimes against humanity, as suggested by Prince Albert II of Monaco at the special session of the General Assembly on children. In an ideal world, there would be a special international tribunal for crimes against children. An affordable alternative in the real world would be to establish a special section on children's rights in the International Criminal Court and to encourage regional courts, such as the European Court of Human Rights, to open such sections.

15. The international community was aware that there was still a long way to go to achieve full respect for children's rights, but no more time could be lost. What had been lost was a sense of urgency, expressed in time-bound targets for action. The study on violence against children had generated considerable momentum, through regional consultations involving the participation of children and young people and through a questionnaire which had garnered an unprecedented response from Member States. The study contained not only an analysis of the various aspects of violence against children but also specific recommendations with time-bound targets which should provide a new beginning for international efforts to protect the rights of children.

16. **Mr. Talbot** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Rio Group expressed concern about the effects of poverty on the livelihoods of children and urged that increased attention be focused on addressing their practical and material needs. Although the International Labour Organization (ILO) report in document A/61/270 stated that there had been

a decline in child labour worldwide, there still needed to be greater concentration on poverty eradication as a means of ensuring children's well-being particularly since ILO had been unable to provide new estimates on the worst forms of child labour.

17. He noted the failure to achieve gender parity in primary education by the year 2005 and reiterated the critical linkage of education and health care to poverty eradication. Further efforts were needed to achieve universal primary education and increased access to secondary education. Despite persistent inequalities, the Latin American and Caribbean region had had some success in the area of health care, but it was still grappling with HIV/AIDS, particularly among adolescents.

18. The study on violence against children formed a solid basis for dialogue and action aimed at strengthening the regime of child protection measures. Several member States of the Rio Group had established agencies to promote and safeguard the rights and well-being of children and the Group continued to advocate mechanisms that promoted a dialogue with children and young people on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Group was currently considering the draft strategic plan of the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and, given its overarching interest in the demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and illegally armed groups, expressed support for any recommendation that sought to increase funding in that area. Children must be given every opportunity to live free from fear and in peace and security.

19. The States members of the Rio Group reaffirmed their commitment to dialogue, transparency and flexibility in their work with other delegations and hoped that the latest resolution on the rights of the child which focused specifically on children and poverty and the study on violence against children, would be adopted by consensus.

20. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) welcomed the fact that the study on violence against children had been conducted using a multi-faceted, participatory approach, especially by seeking input from children at regional consultations. Its recommendations should become concrete obligations, to be met through specific national legislation and strategies for the eradication of all forms of violence against children and the rehabilitation and social integration of victims, and should be disseminated internationally, at all levels of government and society, for discussion and follow-up.

21. Promoting and protecting the rights of boys and girls was a priority for her Government. Despite the challenges faced in guaranteeing universal enforcement of those rights, some progress had been made. The Colombian Congress had recently enacted an Act on Children and Adolescents which incorporated all the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into national legislation, defined the responsibilities of the family, society and the State for upholding those rights and established a coherent system for drafting, financing and implementing in that regard public policy. The formulation of a 10-year National Plan for Children and Adolescents was in its final stages and a national early-childhood policy was being designed to ensure the psychological, emotional and cognitive development of children in their first years of life.

22. To address violence against children, the new Act on Children and Adolescents explicitly prohibited any kind of physical, emotional or psychological mistreatment or punishment of children in educational and social settings. The Government was complying fully with its commitment not to recruit children under the age of 18 to its armed forces. As part of the process of disarming and demobilizing illegal violent groups, a comprehensive programme had been established for the rehabilitation of children linked to those groups, benefiting 3,000 boys and girls. Preventive measures had also been taken, including the upgrading of education centres, incentives to keep children in school, nutrition and leisure programmes and the strengthening of community life.

23. The recent demobilization of over 40,000 members of violent groups and the measures taken to reduce levels of insecurity, coupled with the Government's social development, economic recovery and poverty reduction policies, had had a positive impact on children's quality of life and exercise of their rights. Much remained to be done, but the United Nations had the capacity to give children's rights the prominence they deserved. Children must be recognized as subjects with full rights that must be protected by families, societies and States.

24. **Ms. Cho** Su-jin (Republic of Korea) said that the importance of raising children in a healthy and loving

environment could not be overemphasized. Significant progress had been made since 2002 in creating a world fit for children, but millions of children still lived in extreme poverty, isolated and overlooked. That was especially evident in countries riven by armed conflict or in failed States where children were denied the most basic care and services. Child abuse, violence and trafficking were hidden but prevalent problems in some least developed countries, and one in every eight newly infected HIV/AIDS patients was a child under the age of 18. In the report in document A/61/270, the Secretary-General noted that inadequate resources and a lack of focus on the need to protect children were among the impediments to achieving the goal of a world fit for children, a goal that converged in many respects with the Millennium Development Goals. As part of its commitment to double overall official development assistance (ODA) by 2009, her government had launched an initiative for Africa's development.

25. Education was indispensable for peace and development, as it helped deter children from joining in armed conflict. Her Government, in the context of activities to achieve education for all, had built schools, installed computer labs and provided nutritional supplements to elementary and middle school students in the occupied Palestinian territories. It had also pledged US$ 10 million to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which would help to prevent and treat those diseases in children.

26. Her country's National Youth Commission was responsible for policymaking on children and young people and had recently convened a special conference on youth, attended by children and youth representatives. More and more non-governmental organizations were also paying closer attention to the rights and welfare of children at home and abroad. Working side by side with civil society, her Government would maintain its strong commitment to global efforts to create a world fit for children.

27. **Ms. Seanedzu** (Ghana) expressed appreciation for the independent expert's groundbreaking study, which unveiled the horrific levels of violence suffered by children around the world and its devastating consequences. Unfortunately, much of that violence took place in settings where children would normally expect love and protection, such as the home, schools, communities and places of care. Girls and young women were particular targets. Children also remained vulnerable to child labour, chronic ill health and preventable diseases, poverty and HIV/AIDS.

28. Another urgent issue was the situation of children affected by armed conflict. Despite recent efforts by the Security Council and the international community, children remained victims of forced recruitment, rape and grave human rights abuses in over 30 conflicts worldwide. Large numbers of them had been maimed, killed, denied access to health care and education, separated from their families and displaced from their homes. Concerted action was needed to enforce international protection standards and send a clear message that the international community would bring perpetrators to justice. Accountability and compliance could best be ensured through the strategic plan outlined by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in document A/61/275. Her delegation also applauded the work done by governments and regional and international bodies to monitor compliance with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005).

29. Her Government was continuing to bring its national legislation into line with regional and international instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. Other initiatives to entrench its commitment to children included child-specific development policies and programmes administered by the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs, policy guidelines on orphans and vulnerable children as part of the response to HIV/AIDS, a poverty reduction strategy focusing on vulnerability and exclusion and strenuous efforts in education that had increased school enrolment and attendance for both girls and boys. Improved basic health services for children, particularly in deprived areas of the country, had raised immunization coverage against six childhood diseases and cut the infant mortality rate. A special domestic violence and victims support unit had been created in the Ghana Police Service to provide a safe environment for children and families who were victims of violence, abuse and neglect.

30. Despite those efforts, Ghana, like many other developing countries, had achieved mixed results. Greater numbers of child abuse cases were being reported and recent studies indicated that child sex tourism was on the rise. Lack of resources made it difficult to address child protection issues and she urged donors to ensure that resources were allocated to

activities aimed at eliminating violence against children.

31. **Ms. Rebello** (India) said that the international community must pay more attention to the development of children everywhere, especially in regions where they were most vulnerable. Focus should be placed not just on children's rights, but also on their developmental needs and access to adequate and nutritious food, basic health services and education. Her delegation believed that the General Assembly should also pay greater attention to the plight of children in situations of armed conflict and that the mechanisms to be developed under the Peacebuilding Commission should include rehabilitation and reintegration of all such children. India was home to the largest child population in the world and her Government was fully committed to the goals of "A world fit for children". It had also ratified both Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

32. Elementary education was a fundamental right in her country and the Government was committed to increasing public spending on education. The universal elementary education scheme, which placed special emphasis on girls, had been expanded to cover the entire country. In its commitment to eliminating child labour in all its forms, the Government had passed the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, which imposed a ban on the employment of children under the age of 14 as domestic help or at eateries. However, believing that child labour could not be eliminated by legislation alone, it was also implementing a National Child Labour Project Scheme, the largest such programme worldwide, to withdraw child labour from economic activities. The 2005 National Policy of Action for Children extended all rights to all children up to the age of 18, while the Child Rights Act provided for speedy trials in the case of offences against children or violations of children's rights.

33. **Ms. Setyawati Firman** (Indonesia) said that while the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly (A/61/270) noted the growing trend towards mainstreaming the goals of the special session into national plans of action, that trend was not reflected in meaningful progress on the ground. During the mid-decade review process in 2007, her delegation expected to get a better picture of the progress made and the challenges that remained. One such challenge was children and armed conflict and her delegation agreed that engaging Member States systematically was essential to ensure the effective implementation of standards and norms for the protection of children in such situations.

34. In Indonesia, "A world fit for children" was being implemented under the national human rights framework, through child-related goals and targets incorporated in the National Action Plan on Human Rights. The National Programme for Indonesian Children 2015 addressed four major areas that also formed part of the Millennium Development Goals.

35. To provide quality education under the nine-year compulsory school programme, her Government had been working with national and international stakeholders in renovating school buildings, developing better curricula, building teacher capacity and strengthening school management. Having learned much from the 2004 tsunami, the Government was undertaking a "back to school" programme to provide education for children affected by the May earthquake in Yogyakarta. Child-friendly schools, with clean running water, separate toilets for boys and girls and access for disabled children, had been introduced.

36. In the area of promoting healthy lives, the Government, with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), had conducted a national polio immunization programme in a concerted effort to help the country regain its polio-free status. Indonesia's President had also ordered the free provision of birth registration for every child as a fundamental human right essential to protecting the child's right to an identity. As a way of guaranteeing the protection of children against abuse, exploitation and violence, the Government had been promoting the establishment of child protection commissions at provincial and district level. Steps were also being taken to formulate a national action plan to combat violence against children.

37. Concerning the fourth goal, care for children affected by HIV/AIDS, greater attention to antiretroviral treatment must be balanced with prevention measures, especially those related to mother-to-child transmission of HIV. The need to protect children orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS was equally important.

38. **Ms. Pi** (Uruguay) reiterated her delegation's profound concern at the worldwide persistence of violence, exploitation and abuse of children, in their homes, schools, communities, detention centres and the workplace. Her Government had undertaken to protect the rights of all children and adolescents under its jurisdiction, regardless of ethnic, national or social origin, gender, language, religion, economic position or physical or mental disability. It had a particular responsibility to protect them from all forms of violence, discrimination and abuse, including parents' failure to fulfil their basic duties towards them.

39. Her delegation appreciated the participatory approach taken to compiling the study on violence against children, involving governments, civil society, children and youth themselves, as well as United Nations agencies and regional organizations. It joined the independent expert in calling on all Member States to take urgent action to fulfil their human rights commitments and to protect children against all forms of violence. It believed that the study provided an excellent opportunity for generating real and positive change in the lives of all boys and girls.

40. Poverty too was a form of violence. In her country, poverty tended to affect the youngest members of the population most severely. Street children and child workers were the visible faces of that poverty, which demanded not only an immediate but also a lasting response. It was essential to support families living in poverty by ensuring proper nutrition and health care in pregnancy and the first years of life, so that children could reach their full intellectual and physical potential. Efforts must also be made to universalize early childhood education. Support for the current generation of adolescents and young adults living in poverty would also have an impact on children born in the coming decade. The international community must support global poverty eradication efforts in order to achieve the goal of a world fit for children. Investment in children and respect for their rights were among the most effective ways of eradicating poverty.

41. **Mr. Hannesson** (Iceland) commended the independent expert's study on violence against children as a significant contribution to efforts to further the rights of children all over the world. The active involvement of governments, international organizations, civil society, non-governmental organizations and children themselves was a major achievement. His Government had participated in activities organized by the Council of Europe to develop strategies for protecting children against violence and raise awareness of the issue. Recognizing the importance of child-friendly judicial procedures to protect children from trauma and re-victimization, it had established a multi-agency child-friendly setting — the "Children's House" — where child protection services, the medical professions, law enforcement, prosecution and even court judges worked together under one roof. He underlined the important contribution of UNICEF to safeguarding the rights and interests of children, which had prompted his Government to increase it contribution to UNICEF substantially.

42. **Ms. Bernardi** (San Marino) expressed particular concern about the question of children in armed conflict and urged implementation of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), which established a mandate for the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict. That mechanism should act on six grave abuses: killing or maiming of children; recruitment or use of child soldiers; attacks against schools or hospitals; rape or other grave sexual violence against children; abduction of children; and denial of humanitarian access for children. The United Nations should monitor all situations, even in countries that were not on the Security Council's agenda.

43. Her delegation believed that national governments, the relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and civil society should all cooperate in protecting and rehabilitating children in dire situations. Particular attention must be given to the fact that many cases of abuse and violations against children during armed conflicts were perpetrated by United Nations peacekeeping troops. Her Government supported the implementation of the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse of children and the full compliance of all actors with the United Nations code of conduct. Illicit subregional and cross-border activities harmful to children and other violations and abuses committed against children in situations of armed conflict must be universally condemned.

44. **Mr. Chernenko** (Russian Federation) said that despite the international community's child protection efforts, children remained the most vulnerable population group: they were the first to suffer from hunger and disease, poverty and exploitation, armed

conflict and terrorism. In pursuing the goal of sparing children the suffering and horrors they currently faced, governments should follow the basic principles set out in international instruments. It was troubling to see that some delegations were attempting to politicize the issue of children by making false insinuations in pursuit of political ambitions. In cooperation with UNHCHR, his Government was planning to hold a seminar on how to implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child more effectively.

45. Pursuant to the outcome document of the special session on children, his Government had implemented a federal programme, "Children of Russia", for 2003-2006; a similar programme was planned for 2007-2010. Improving the situation of children was a key part of Russian social policy. In an effort to raise the birth rate, the Government had proposed doubling the monthly social allowance for the first child and quadrupling it for the second child. Upon the birth of the second child, mothers would receive a lump-sum payment that they could use for the child's education or health care or for housing. Incentives were also planned to increase the number of foster homes for orphaned children. A new government committee had been created to coordinate child protection efforts.

46. During its presidency of the Group of Eight, his Government had organized an unprecedented event: a "Junior Eight" at which delegations of young people had met for two weeks to discuss global issues and report on their conclusions to participants at the Group of Eight Summit. In September 2006, the Government had organized an international seminar on developing institutional mechanisms to improve the situation of children, including disabled and orphaned children. The problems of children were a priority for his Government, which advocated increased international efforts to safeguard children's rights to dignity, development and protection.

47. **Ms.** Ang Siok **Hui** (Singapore) said that, in its commitment to improving the lives of children, her Government continued to focus on key areas such as health, education, legislation and social services and had established a robust legislative framework to protect children's fundamental rights. The Compulsory Education Act ensured the right to six years of basic education. In the area of child protection, national standards for the protection of children had been established and a family violence networking system ensured a coordinated approach towards detecting child abuse and providing protection. Legislation had also been amended to expand the definition of child abuse to include emotional and psychological abuse.

48. Child sex tourism was particularly abhorrent and could not be tackled only at the national level. Her Government had therefore joined other South-East Asia and the Pacific governments in efforts to halt such exploitation. It was also involved in a regional campaign against child sex tourism that combated sexual abuse of children by foreign travellers. It continued to support regional and international efforts to protect children and provide them with opportunities to learn, play, grow and reach their full potential.

49. **Mr. Alakhder** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that although most States had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, enormous harm continued to be caused to children by armed conflict, sexual violence, displacement, police brutality and child labour. The international community needed to make States answerable for implementing the international conventions that they had signed, hold violators accountable and impose sanctions. The phenomenon of street children who were exploited by gangs and led into a life of delinquency was on the increase and greater efforts were needed to address it. His delegation was deeply concerned about the suffering of Palestinian children under Israeli occupation, who were prevented from attending school by Israeli roadblocks and were deprived of their rights and identity. Lebanese children too had suffered from an unjust war, the brutality of which was exemplified by the second Qana massacre, and they continued to be killed by internationally banned cluster bombs. His delegation called on the United Nations to cooperate with the African Union in addressing the problems caused to African children by discrimination, HIV/AIDS, misguided traditional practices and armed conflict. His Government, which had ratified all the international instruments related to the rights of the child, had set up health-care and vaccination centres all over Libya, believing that the health and welfare of its children was the best investment that a society could make.

50. **Ms. Assoumou** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that poverty, malnutrition, HIV/AIDS, discrimination, armed conflict, child labour and sexual exploitation had become children's daily lot. The situation of children in armed conflict and child soldiers was particular cause

for concern and her Government therefore welcomed the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and was committed to ratifying it once the political situation in the country permitted. The ceasefire agreement signed in Côte d'Ivoire took account of the need to protect children and the process of disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating some 4,000 child soldiers had begun. Under that process, more than 300 demobilized children had received appropriate care for emotional and psycho-social problems, prior to their reintegration into society.

51. Child labour was another aspect of violence against children. In Côte d'Ivoire, children were the victims of trafficking and exploitation in mines and cocoa plantations. The Government had established an institutional framework and legal instruments to combat that phenomenon, including a Ministry for Family, Women and Children and a Ministry of Human Rights. It had ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and ILO Conventions Nos. 138 and 182 and had signed a multilateral cooperation agreement with nine other African countries to combat child labour and trafficking.

52. **Mr. Al-Moqhim** (Saudi Arabia) said that his Government's concern for the rights of children stemmed from both the country's Basic Law and the Islamic sharia, which regarded human rights as a divine blessing. Saudi Arabian law began protecting children while they were still in the womb, by prohibiting abortion except for health reasons, and provided care throughout pregnancy and after birth. The country's labour laws provided for maternity leave, the right of mothers to return to their jobs after giving birth, and breastfeeding breaks. A child's right of inheritance went into effect prior to birth. Free education was provided to all children, including those with special needs, and governmental and civil institutions nurtured children's education, health and recreation. The Government encouraged foster families to care for orphaned children, and provided children's centres equipped with educational and recreational materials. Assistance was available for families with disabled children.

53. His Government had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Covenant of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) on the Rights of the Child. It had approved the 10-year programme of action adopted at the third extraordinary session of OIC, held in Mecca, which included many aspects relevant to children. It urged OIC member States to accede to the OIC Covenant and States Members of the United Nations to accede to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto.

54. His country's concern for children did not stop at its borders. King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, while still Crown Prince, had joined with the Prime Minister of Malaysia in a 15-year US$ 150 million project for child victims of the Asian tsunami. His delegation was distressed that Israel, not content with causing suffering to the Palestinian children under its occupation, was also causing suffering to children in Lebanon as a result of its vicious aggression against that country.

55. **Mr. Suwal** (Nepal) reiterated his Government's commitment to its implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the national, regional and international levels. Special attention must be paid to issues specific to children, but those issues could not be divorced from larger development challenges. Achieving the goals of halving poverty and providing universal access to primary education by 2015 was a daunting challenge, because despite having good policies and plans, least developed countries such as Nepal needed additional international financial and technical assistance to achieve the goals of their national action plans for children.

56. As one of the most vulnerable groups in society, Nepalese children had suffered most from the violence and conflict of recent years. Children in remote rural areas and from marginalized communities were also at risk, making social inclusion a high priority. Universal primary education and social services for children were being promoted through programmes with village development committees and municipalities, in cooperation with development partners and non-governmental organizations. The Government had also adopted legislation such as the Children Act, safeguarding the rights of children, and the Child Labour (Prohibition and Control) Act, prohibiting the employment of children under age 16.

57. His Government had taken strict measures to prevent child abduction, recruitment of child soldiers and detention of children under any circumstances. It was fully committed to solving the Maoist problem through dialogue and peaceful means. Sustained peace and stability in the country would improve the situation

of all children. As a democratic Nepal emerged from conflict and violence, it needed additional financial and technical assistance to improve the quality of its education and health services and other programmes for the development of children.

58. **Mr.** Win **Mra** (Myanmar) said that implementation of the four major goals of the Plan of Action adopted at the special session on children would greatly assist efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. His Government had drawn up a national plan of action and enacted legislation to help create a world fit for children. The under-5 mortality rate in his country, a critical indicator of the well-being of children, had improved noticeably, and progress had been made in the universal salt iodization programme. Yearly measles immunization programmes had been conducted since 1987 and the goal of total immunization coverage should be reached in 2006. Combating malaria was also a national priority, with the goal of halving morbidity by 2010. Access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation was an indispensable component of primary health care and the Millennium Development Goal of giving 66 per cent of the population access by 2015 had been met and exceeded in 2000. Considerable progress had been made in providing quality education, with equal access for boys and girls, and the Government was on target to achieve the goal of universal primary education by 2015.

59. Peace and stability prevailed in Myanmar, thanks to the return of 17 out of the 18 insurgent groups to the legal fold, and the country was no longer in a situation of armed conflict. The Government had taken firm measures to prevent the recruitment of children under 18 into the army and had made arrangements for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNICEF to visit military recruitment centres in Yangon and Mandalay to verify that recruitment was in compliance with the law. It would continue to cooperate with those agencies.

60. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon) said that over the past summer, Lebanon and its children had once again been victims of Israeli aggression, with over 1,100 civilians killed and over 4,000 injured. The education sector had suffered around $70 million in damage: close to 50 schools had been totally destroyed, while 300 others needed repairs. Water systems had been totally or partially destroyed, leaving at least 1.7 million people, 40 per cent of them children, with interrupted supplies. The biggest risk to the lives of children in south Lebanon, however, was unexploded ordnance, which would take months, if not years, to clear. Since the cessation of hostilities, 124 people had been killed or wounded by unexploded bombs, many of which were designed to look like toys or chocolate bars.

61. After describing an incident that had taken place on 15 July 2006, in which Israeli troops had deliberately targeted a Lebanese family as it fled the fighting, killing several children, he said that his Government condemned the killing of children and of all civilians and looked forward to the day when children would be able to learn and play together, in line with the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.